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Clash of Civilizations

Inayatullah Khan*

Abstract:

The fall of Berlin Wall on 9Th November, 1989 was an important mile stone of the last decade of 20th century. It not only changed the history of East and West Germany but started a new phase of human history. The world welcomed this reunion with a sigh of relief and hoped to enter into the new millennium with the message of peace and harmony. But the publication of an article 'The Clash of Civilizations' in summer of 1993 in the Foreign Affairs magazine by Samuel P. Huntington, set new alarm bells ringing. In this article he expressed the opinion that the future of world politics would be dominated by conflicts between civilizations. The publication of the article generated an intense debate and according to the editor of that distinguished journal, seldom had so much interest been taken in an article since George Kennan's article of containment in 1940s. It was put to severe intellectual trial, both for and against, around the world .If the debate had only confined to an intellectual discourse, it would not have stirred that much interest but the world actually started heading towards a new phase of tension in the name of war against terror. Now the world is gripped by this new phase of world wide confrontation. Is clash of civilization a myth or reality? Did it start at the end of Cold War or simply resurfaced, or did it start with the creation of Adam and the concomitant emergence of Satan? What is the position of Islam vis-à-vis the theory of 'Clash of Civilizations'? All these questions are just mind boggling and needs to be explored thoroughly. This paper tries to present an Islamic critique and appraisal of Samuel Huntington theory.

An Overview of the Contents of the Book:

According to Huntington the years after the Cold War witnessed dramatic changes in people's identities and the symbolism involved in it began to redefine global politics along cultural lines. Huntington

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mentions a few events to prove his thesis. For example, in April 18, 1994 two thousand people rallied in Sarajevo waving the flags of Saudi Arabia and Turkey. By flying those banners, instead of U.N., NATO, or American flags, these Sarajevans identified themselves with their fellow Muslims and informed the world about their real friends. He quotes another example on October 16, 1994 in Los Angeles 70,000 people marched beneath “a sea of Mexican flags” protesting against a referendum measure denying many state benefits to illegal immigrants and their children. Some observers asked why they are waving Mexican flags instead of American flags.¹ Huntington believes that in the post cold war world flags counts and so do other symbols of cultural identity, including crosses, crescents and even head coverings, because cultural identity is what is most meaningful to most people.²

The central theme of this book is that culture and cultural identities, which at the broadest level are civilization identities, are defining the pattern of relationship in the post cold war world. He believes that for the first time in history global politics has become multipolar and multicivilizational.³ In the post cold war world, the most important differences among people are not ideological, political, and economic but are cultural. People define themselves in terms of religion, language, history, values, customs and institutions. Among all these identities religion is the central defining characteristic of civilizations.⁴ Political boundaries increasingly are redrawn to coincide with cultural ones; ethnic, religious, and civilization. Cultural communities are replacing Cold War blocs, and the fault lines between civilizations are becoming the central lines of conflict in global politics.⁵ The five parts of the book elaborates the central theme. These parts are summarized as follows:

Part I: This part elaborates the fact that for the first time in history global politics has become multipolar and multicivilizational. It also differentiates modernization from westernization. The author believes that as expected westernization is not leading us to universal civilization but ironically the things are going the other way around. Where as the nonwestern societies are rapidly becoming modernized, strangely they are getting more culture conscious.

Part II: The author believes that the west is declining and the rest are rising. An imminent shift of balance of power is visible. For example Asian civilizations are expanding militarily, economically and politically. Islam is expanding demographically with destabilizing consequences for Muslim countries and their neighbors.

Part III: Countries of the world are regrouping along cultural lines. All efforts to shift societies from one civilization to another have badly failed. Each civilization has a potential or real core state and countries grouped themselves around these lead states along civilizational lines. This is giving rise to a civilization based world order.

Part IV: There is mounting threat of conflict among different civilizations. The west's Universalist pretensions are bringing it into conflict with other civilizations, especially Islamic and Cinic Civilizations. According to author Islam and China are the potential challenger civilizations of the west.

Part V: this part recommends to the West including America to take western civilization as unique rather than universal. West should unite to preserve its civilizations from the challenges posed by non-western societies. It further recommends the preservation and acceptance of multicivilizational character of global politics.

The Clash Debate

Samuel Huntington wrote the clash of civilizations in response to Francis Fukayama's article entitled "The End of History?" which first appeared in the journal *The National Interest* in the summer of 1989. Later on this article was developed in to a book. Fukayama argued that a remarkable consensus concerning the legitimacy of liberal democracy as system of government had emerged throughout the world, conquering rival ideologies like hereditary monarchy, fascism and finally communism. He opined that man's quest for a perfect political order has been completed and western liberal democracy may constitute the, "end point of mankind's ideological evolution" and the" final form of human government.⁶ He further contends that by the end of history he does not mean to suggest that occurrence of events would cease to exist but rather history understood as a single, coherent, evolutionary process had come to an end and man's search for universal perfect political order has ended.⁷

Huntington responded to this one world paradigm of Fukayama by putting forward the theory of clash of civilization. Although the intellectual debate about the clash of civilization started very earlier with the publication of *The Decline of The West* by Oswald Spengler, first published in 1918, after world war first. Spengler defines history by civilizations [he refers to them as cultures]. He made civilization a term of reference for historical study. He believed that the then current (1918) dominant culture in the world was western and it had entered a state of decline.⁸ Arnold Toynbee's book *A study of History* further continues and amplifies the civilization based approach to history that Spengler put forward. He opined that down fall of a civilization comes when the "creative minority" stops producing good ideas and become satisfies to

rule in an unjust manner. This precipitates the decline of that culture's dominance.⁹ But the man who actually coined the term "The Clash of Civilizations" is Bernard Lewis, a professor of Middle Eastern studies. He wrote an article in 1990 by the title "The Roots of Muslim Rage" and used the term "the clash of civilizations" in it,¹⁰ which later on gained prominence from Huntington's article by that name. Huntington's thesis is accepted by many people after the September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States. Although others believe that his work has actually provoked the confrontation. It has, therefore, been put to severe intellectual trial by many scholars. Amrtha sen, a noble laureate of Indian origin, has criticized Huntington's theory in his book *Identity and Violence* and has questioned that why religious identity is not destiny. He believes that a person belongs to many different groups of which religious affiliation is only one. To identify, for example, a mathematician who happens to be a Muslim by religion mainly is unjust. He further argued that this tendency to overlook many other identities of human beings and to classify individuals according to religious identity, only, can provoke divisiveness of human society to dangerous level. People in the world can be categorized according to many other identities, for example, nationalities, occupations, social status, language, locations, politics and many others.¹¹ Stephen Walt is another western scholar who wrote a comprehensive refutation of the clash of civilizations thesis. He argues that the theory does not properly explain why loyalties in the post cold war era are shifting from the national level to the civilizational level. He says that even if one assumes that there will be a shift of loyalties from nations to civilizations in the post cold war era, why this shift should necessarily lead to violence. Walt further says

that why conflict is more likely to happen between civilizations than within them.¹²

Professor Fouad Ajami, of John Hopkins's University, also published a rebuttal of "the clash of civilizations" in the very next issue of foreign affairs. Fouad Ajami argues that "the clash of civilizations" ignores the role of state in international conflict, which has been the principal driving force in international relations. He, therefore, believes that state will not act according to civilizational identity in future and the predominant self interest of state will still mould relations among nations. According to Fouad Ajami civilization does not control state rather states control civilizations.¹³

Fareed zakaria has also questioned Huntington's thesis that culture is destiny. For example he says that why American culture produced great depression. And the once-feudal culture of Japan and Germany have adapted to capitalism, making them the second and third richest countries in the world, respectively. A single country can succeed and fail at different times, which proves that some thing other than cultures is at work.¹⁴

Benazir Bhutto in her book *Reconciliation: Islam, Democracy and the West*, has also refuted the theory of clash of civilizations. She says that the future of 21st century will be shaped by the peaceful growth of democracy and moderation around the world, most specifically in Islamic nations, countering the thesis of Huntington. She further says democracies do not go to war with democracies and do not become sponsors of state terrorism. The west should, therefore, promote and encourage democracies in the Islamic world. Clash between Islam and the west can be avoided if democracy is institutionalized in the Muslim

world. It would isolate and marginalize the extremists. She contends that Islam stands for pluralistic society.¹⁵

Muhammad Khathami, the then president of Iran, came forward with an interesting proposal of dialogue among civilizations. The year 2001 was, therefore, declared a year of dialogue among civilizations by the U.N. General Assembly. Khathami says that dialogue among civilizations will promote more understanding in the world. Unlike Huntington, who sees only conflict in interaction, khathami believes that interaction among civilizations will lead to the sharing of ideas. He said “members state of the U.N. should endure to remove barriers from the way of dialogue among cultures and civilizations, and should abide by the basic preconditions of dialogue. This fundamental principle rejects any impositions and builds upon the premises that all parties to dialogue stand on essentially equal footings. The absence of dialogue among thinkers, scholars and intellectuals from various cultures and civilizations precipitate dangerous cultural homelessness”.¹⁶

An Islamic Appraisal of the Clash of Civilizations Theory

Islam is about one-fourth of the human race and the second largest religion of the world, but still it is the most misunderstood religion and at times severely demonized in the west. Since the end of cold war, western intelligentsia and academia are continuously portraying it as challenger to the western civilization; and a threat to the exalted human institutions and values of democracy, human rights, individual liberties and religious plurality. Clash of Civilizations and Remaking of the World Order by Samuel P. Huntington is the reflection of that mindset. An objective and dispassionate critique of this theory is sin-qua-non for presenting the true picture of Islam, to set the record straight and minimize the potential clash between the two great civilizations of the world.

But to put things in proper perspective and context, we should clarify certain misconceptions regarding Islam and explain the fundamental postulates on which the edifice of Islamic civilization has been erected.

Before proceeding further we must deal with the questions, what is religion? And why religion? What is civilization and what are the ingredients of an Islamic civilization? What is the Islamic concept of jihad? Is Islam a totalitarian ideology, choking the voice of dissent or does it stand for religious plurality? A brief analysis and critique of these questions will set things in proper context for the ensuing debate on clash of civilizations in the light of Islam.

The Importance of Religion for Mankind

The fundamental question confronting man in this modern era of the conquest of space is the identification of his own exact position in this universe. Although man has conquered the seas and skies; and has harnessed the forces of nature to his service, but still he finds himself in the civilization he developed, threatened with the forces of his own creation,¹⁷ because he has divorced religion from his life and made his life incomplete himself. Man has suppressed the natural curiosity of knowing his exact position in the universe at the behest of his animal desires. Man is unable to explain to himself the mystery of life, the mystery of birth and death, the mystery of infinity and eternity.¹⁸ These intriguing questions are demanding answers in the modern age from the modern man the same way it troubled his ancestors thousands years back. He can, therefore, do two things. He will either have to give up all attempts to understand life as totality and rely upon the evidence of external experiences alone. Although man has covered a journey of more than 5000 years to understand this world through the external experience

but only fragment of a totality has been grasped by him through the exact science till this day. The other possibility- which may exist side by side with the scientific one- is the way of religion. It leads man to the acceptance of unitary explanation of life, on the assumption that there exists a supreme creative power which governs universe according to some preconceived plans. Although this conception does not prevent man from the investigation of such facts; and things of life which offers themselves for external observations. So religion provides answers to the questions which are beyond the scope of scientific methodology of enquiry and observations. The religious man understands that whatever happens to him is not the outcome of blind forces it is rather the outcome of God's conscious will alone.¹⁹ The religion of Islam, therefore, does not believe in the compartmentalization of life into spiritual and material. Islam is neither a mystical doctrine nor a philosophy; it is simply a program of life in accordance with nature, which aims at establishing perfect harmony and coordination between the spiritual and material aspects of man. This unitary concept of life in Islam is a fundamental departure from the western concept of 'leave to God, what is Gods and on to Ceaser, what is Ceaser's'.

Civilization and Its Meaning

The answer to the first question regarding religion logically leads us to the ensuing questions regarding civilizations. Human history is the history of civilizations,²⁰ writes Huntington. He believes that civilizations have provided the broadest identification for people down the ages. Nineteenth century German thinkers have drawn sharp distinction between civilization and culture. According to them civilizations involve mechanics, technology, and material factors, while culture involves values, ideals, and the higher intellectual artistic and

moral qualities of a society.²¹ Huntington believes that civilization and culture both refer to the overall way of life of a people and a civilization is a culture writ large. Blood, language, religion, and way of life are considered to be the ingredients of different civilizations. According to Huntington the most important one is usually religion, because all major civilizations in human history have been closely identified with world great religions.²²

Sayid Maududi believes that art, architecture, knowledge, ways of living, customs and traditions, and political system does not constitute civilization in itself. These are, instead, the manifestation of a civilization and are not its essence. These manifestations are the branches and leaves of a civilization. He argues that for the right assessment and evaluation of a civilization, certain queries must be clarified. According to this point of view the first thing which needs to be explored regarding a civilization is that what does it think about life? What is the exact position of man in this universe? What is this world and what is the relation of man with this world? The second question relates to the objective of human life. What is the goal of human life? Why this whole world has been created? What is the ultimate goal after which man should strive? The third question is regarding the fundamental beliefs and postulates which constitute that civilization. How that civilization wants to mould the mind of man? What kind of thinking it wants to inculcate and in what direction it wants to motivate human beings? The fourth question is regarding the moral training of human beings in that civilization. What kind of moral values, characteristics and personal qualities it wants to nourish? Although civilization essentially wants to build social life, but in fact individuals are the building blocks on which the palace of civilization is erected. The

fifth question is regarding the relations among human beings. How that civilization connect man to other human beings, relatives, friends, subordinates, superiors and neighbors? What are the rights of others over him and what are his rights over others? What are his limitations? Where he has been given freedom and to what extent?

This discussion proves that there are five major ingredients of a civilization:

- Man's concept about life;
- About the goal of life;
- The fundamental postulates of faith;
- Training of its individuals;
- And social order.

Every civilization of the world is constituted from these five ingredients.²³ These five elements also constitute Islamic civilization.

Islamic civilization is unique in its kind for providing this new paradigm to the world. It has remained for a long time the torch bearer and leading civilization of the world for upholding moral and spiritual values, and the values of knowledge, humanity, morality and equality. It has rightly been called the most perfect civilization.²⁴ It has unrivaled superiority over other civilizations as regards its universality, perfection and balance. Bernard Louis admits that Islam is one of the world's great religion. It has brought comfort and peace of mind to countless of millions of men and women. It has given dignity and meaning to drab and impoverished lives. It has brought people of different races to live in brotherhood and people of different creeds to live side by side in reasonable tolerance. It inspired a great civilization, in which others

beside Muslims lived creative and useful lives, enriching the whole world.²⁵

The Fundamental Postulates of Islam

Tawheed, belief in the finality of the prophet hood of Muhammad (PBUH) and belief in the hereafter, are the central tenants of Islam around which the edifice of Islamic civilization revolve. Tawheed is a revolutionary concept which means that there is one supreme lord of the universe. This entire universe has been created by him and he is omnipotent, omnipresent and sustainer of all living beings. Belief in the finality of prophet hood and life after death signifies the fact that God after creating man has not left him without any guidance for the conduct of life. He has sent prophets for the guidance of mankind down the ages. And Muhammad (PBUH) was the last prophet. The second basic postulate of Islam is belief in the prophet hood of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which enjoins upon the followers of Islam to accept him as law giver and follow the code of conduct which he taught. The third basic postulate of Islam is the belief in the hereafter. It means that this world is a place of trial and man is here for a short while to be judged in it. Life on the earth will come to an end, and after that a new world will be resurrected. Man will be punished or rewarded for his misdeeds or deeds on the day of resurrection. Islam does not leave man to his fate as an irresponsible being. Thus, Islam makes man responsible and accountable. It has given that vigor, continuing vitality, and universality to Islamic civilization, which made it the predominant civilization of the world for more than one thousand years and is, still the potential future dominant civilization of the world.

Islamic Concept of Jihad

jihad is one of the most misunderstood concept of Islam. The demonization of Islam and vilification campaign against it is based on the distorted perceptions regarding jihad. Even the translation of the word jihad as holy war is mischievous and sinister. It is continuously interpreted in a way that it has now become equivalent to violent madness. Listening to the word jihad, therefore, brings to mind that a group of religious zealots holding swords in their hands, wearing beards and chanting Allah-o-akbar and attacking and killing every non-Muslim who refuses to convert to Islam. This misconception has either been intentionally or unknowingly propagated worldwide. To understand the true meaning of jihad and getting to its ethos we must be aware at the outset that Islam is not a religion in its conventional sense. It is not a set of dogmas, rituals and beliefs merely. Islamic nation also can not be confused with the narrow and parochial concept of nationhood which defines nation as a group of homogeneous men who have come together due to some common characteristics and who resort to war either for defending their interests or exploiting others. Islam is, in fact, a universal revolutionary ideology. It wants to change the existing social order of the world and replace it by an order based on its golden principles of just socio-economic and moral order.²⁶ Muslims of the world are the constituent of this revolutionary party and jihad is an all-out struggle carried out for achieving this exalted goal. Islam has, therefore, consciously used the terminology of jihad which means to exert one's utmost endure in promoting a cause. Islam has opted for jihad in a radical departure from the use of conventional terminology of war, consciously to differentiate jihad from wars fought for gratifying greed for land, wealth and personal glory.²⁷ It does not believe in capturing land for the

sake of land rather wars are fought for establishing a God conscious just socio-moral order in the world.

The establishment of a just socio-economic and moral order is the ultimate destiny of man. So Islam, in fact, is the destiny of man. Although Islam has come to dominate and resist domination but it has never allowed its followers to wage the struggle by hitting below the belt. It has, therefore, brought revolutionary changes in wars and the laws of wars. According to Islam the primary objective of war is to prevent others from spreading mischief on the earth. It believes that power should be used to the extent to which it is needed. Islam has, therefore, laid down laws for the war. It has divided the belligerents between combatants and noncombatants. Combatants are those who are actually taking part in war and noncombatants include women, children, old people, sick, injured, blind, disabled, insane, tourists, and those who are sitting in monasteries. Islam has allowed the killing of combatants and prohibited the killings of noncombatants.²⁸ It has even civilized the laws of war regarding combatants. For example, it is not allowed to attack enemy at night and especially last part of the night, unknowingly. Islam has banned the burning of living or dead enemies. It also disallows torturing enemies to death. It has prevented the advancing armies from spoiling crops, destroying fields, indiscriminate killings and the actions of arson in the enemy territory. Islam does not allow the desecration of dead bodies, like cutting its hand, nose, foot or tongue, the killing of prisoner of war and ambassadors. It believes in adhering to the covenant strictly and does not go to war with people who have entered into agreement with Muslims.²⁹

Islam and Religious Plurality:

Islam has been misinterpreted as intolerant and narrow attitude of mind. It is portrayed as religion which suppresses individual liberty and difference of opinion. The modern world is a world of religious and political pluralism. The world is searching for unity in diversity. Islam is the most tolerant and accommodative religion which believes in reason and intellect. It constantly appeals to intuitions, and intellect of every individual. Quran, therefore, draws the attention of man towards the signs of Allah with in himself and those dispersed throughout the universe. Why Islam directly addresses man to look into himself and around himself, because it admits logic and wants to act according to logic. In the Holy Quran the repeated appearances of the words like intellect, thought, farsightedness and wisdom more than 200 times. Islam has, therefore, successfully accommodated different and conflicting views, varying cultures and people of different backgrounds under one system that equally addressed the needs and requirements of these different groups. It stands for religious and political pluralism. This pluralism has been developed by the Muslim jurists directly under the guidance of the Holy Quran and Sunnah. The term minority was never used by Muslim jurists before the twentieth century. It is not found in literature produced by Muslim theologians and writers on political thought. However, the rights and privileges of a non Muslims in Muslim society are dealt with in elaborate details.³⁰ Respect for human dignity and primacy of humanity is evident from the examples of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). In Medina once the prophet saw the body of a Jew, who had been his enemy, was carrying by his people to the graveyard, he immediately stood up in reverence to the body. Somebody reminded the prophet confidentially and secretly that this was the body of such and

such Jew. (That is an enemy). But the prophet responded, with a raised voice, “Is it not a human soul?”³¹ The conduct of the prophet and his companion with respect to non Muslims in Islamic realm became important source of law. This is the basis on which the private international law of Islam was developed. Non Muslims have been living in Muslim societies from the very beginning, when the prophet migrated to Medina at the invitation of new Muslims and established state in Medina, he entered into understanding with Jews of medina, and a document was chalked out in consultation with local chiefs. This document contains the rights and privileges of Jews, the local inhabitants of medina and the migrants from Mecca. This charter has been considered by some contemporary scholars to be the first written constitution in the history of mankind.³² Another such agreement signed by Prophet (PBUH) was in relation to the Christians of Najaran. In this charter the prophet guaranteed basic freedom to the non Muslim tribes of Najaran, undertaking that: (i) whatever their earlier habits or practices had been, they would never be changed; (ii) Whatever their rights and privileges, these would never be subject to change; and (iii) Their religious matters would continue to be run according to their religion.³³ In this connection, historians of Islam have recorded the visit of a Christian delegation from Najaran to Medina. They had come to convince the Holy Prophet on the truthfulness of trinity. It is narrated that the prophet entertained and hosted them in the mosque. Moreover, when the time of their worship came, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) allowed them to offer their prayers in the mosque.³⁴ This and similar other events point towards the kind of pluralistic society developed by Prophet (PBUH) under the guidance of Allah Almighty. Islam does not believe in forced conversion. Allah Almighty in the Holy Quran says, “There shall

be no coercion in Islam”.³⁵ Islam, therefore, spread in the world due to the missionary zeal and the pious character of its followers and not sword. This fact has been admitted by Professor Thomas Arnold, he writes, “the spread of this faith over so vast portion of the globe is due to various causes social, political and religious: but among these, one of the most powerful factors at work in the production of this stupendous result, has been the unremitting labors of Muslim missionaries, who, with Prophet (PBUH) himself as their great example, have spent themselves for the conversion of unbelievers”. He further says that “even in the hours of its political degradation Islam has achieved some of its most brilliant spiritual conquests: on two great historical occasions the conquerors have accepted the religion of the conquered i.e. the Saljoq Turks in the 11th and the Mongols in the 13th century. At present day the faith of Islam extends from Morocco to Zanzibar, from Sierra Leon to Siberia and China, from Bosnia to New Guinea. Outside the limits of strictly Muhammadan population there are some few small communities of the followers of the prophet, which bear witness to the faith of Islam in the midst of unbelievers. Such as the Polish-speaking Muslims of Tatar origin in Lithuania, that inhabits the districts of Kovno, Vilno, and Grodno; the Dutch-speaking Muslims of Cape Colony; and the coolies that have carried the faith of Islam with them to the West Indian Islands and to British and Dutch Guiana. In recent years, too, Islam has found adherents in England, in North America, Australia and Japan.”³⁶

The Clash Dialectics and Islam

After a brief critique of misconceptions regarding Islam, we would like to deal with the clash debate in the light of Islam. One is intrigued to ask: does clash exist at all? Did it start with Samuel Huntington’s publication

of the article or was it a suppressed phenomenon which resurfaced in the aftermath of cold war? What does Islam say in this regard?

To deny the existence of a perennial clash is to deny reality. Man has born with clash. It started right from the creation of man when the forces of evil challenged God's decision to appoint man as His vicegerent on earth. When God created Adam and ordered angels to prostrate before him, they all prostrated themselves, save Iblis, who refused and glorified in his arrogance; and thus he became one of those who denied the truth (verse 24, Al-baqara.) The Satanic forces not only refused to prostrate before man but declared that they would always try to derail man from the right path. As Quran says, "they invoke only lifely symbols-thus invoking none but a rebellious Satan whom God has reject from having said, "verily, of thy servants I shall most certainly take my due share, and shall lead them astray, and fill them with wane desires; and I shall command them- and they will cut off the ears of cattle; and I shall command them- and they will corrupt God's creation."³⁷ Elsewhere God in the Holy Quran has been telling Satan that he will have no control over God conscious people. This theme runs in all revealed scriptures. Even bible has narrated it in the book of Genesis. Political thinkers and philosophers have touched upon the subject down the ages, although in a different style and context. For example, Thomas Hobbes believed that man is individualistic, self-seeking, fearful, and competitive to the point of combativeness. If he were completely at liberty to follow his inclinations then there would be a war of every man against every man.³⁸ According to Hobbes life in the state of nature was short, brutish and nasty. It, therefore, forced man in to a social contract for his security and survival.

Karl Marx's whole thesis of Dialectical Materialism has been raised on the perennial class war among different economic interests and social groups.

Graham E. Fuller has posed a hypothetical question that had Islam never existed what would have been the world without Islam? To some, it would have been a comforting thought. There would have been no clash of civilizations, no holy wars, no terrorism; Christianity would have taken over the world and Middle East would have been a peaceful democratic region. There would have been no 9/11. But, sadly, remove Islam from the path of history and the world ends up exactly where it is today. Graham E. Fuller further probes this question of Middle East. He says remove Islam from the face of Middle East and the region still remains complex and conflicted. The dominant ethnic groups of Middle East-Arabs, Persians, Turks, Jews even Berbers and Pashtoons would still dominate politics. Take the Persians: long before Islam, successive great Persian Empire pushed to the doors of Athens and were the perpetual rivals of whoever inhabited Anatolia. Even if the Iraqis would have been Christian, they would not have welcomed the U.S. occupation of Iraq. Nowhere do people welcome foreign occupation and the killings of their citizens at the hands of foreign troops. Who shamelessly persecuted Jews for more than a thousand years, culminating in the Holocaust? Anti-Semitism was firmly rooted in Western Christian lands and cultures.³⁹

Clash, therefore, exists and had existed down the ages. Samuel Huntington had only stated historical fact in a new fashion. He is also right that religion is a central defining characteristic of civilization; although language, geography and race are also important ingredients of civilization as has been fully explained by Ibn-i-Khaldun in his

illustrious book: *Muqadma*. But Islam is unique in this regard which has completely discarded the identities of race, language and color. Islam addresses to the conscience of humanity and banishes all false barriers of race, status and wealth. And there can be no denying the fact that such barriers have always existed and do exist even today in this so called enlightened age. But Islam removes all these impediments and promotes the idea of whole humanity being one family of God. It wants to unite the entire human race under one banner. To a world torn by rivalries and feuds, it brings a message of life and hope and a promise of glorious future. No matter what may be your language, race, color or country, the moment a man embraces Islam, he becomes part of this universal community.

One can, therefore, only partially agree with Huntington, because the clash is not always violent and Islam does present a peaceful alternative. Islamic resurgence around the world, therefore, is not the product of poverty, demographic explosion and political disenfranchisement; rather it is the conscious reawakening in the Muslim world regarding its God ordained duty to establish a just, socio-economic and moral order. Even Fareed Zakria, an eminent American intellectual, has admitted that Al-Qaeda network is not made up of the poor and dispossessed. Bin Laden was born in to a family worth more than \$5 billion. His key associate Zawahere, a former surgeon in Cairo, belongs to the highest ranks of Egyptian society. His father was professor at Cairo University and his uncle the first secretary general of Arab League. Muhammad Atha, the alleged pilot of the plane to hit world trade centre, came from a modern Egyptian family. His father was a lawyer. He had two sisters, a professor and a doctor. He himself studied in America. Of the nineteen hijackers on the four planes used in September 11 attacks,

fifteen were from Saudi Arabia, the world largest petroleum exporter. It is unlikely that poverty was at the heart of their anger. If poverty was the source of terror, the recruits should have come from Sub-Saharan Africa not the Middle East.⁴⁰

There are some inherent contradictions in Huntington's thesis while analyzing the Muslim world. For example he writes, "The success of Islamists movements in dominating the opposition establishing themselves is the only viable alternative to incumbent regime was also greatly helped by the policies of those regimes. At one time or another during the cold war many governments including those of Algeria, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt and Israel encouraged and supported Islamist as counter to communist or hostile nationalist. At least until the Gulf war, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states provided massive funding to the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamists groups in a variety of countries. The ability of Islamist groups to dominate the opposition was also enhanced by government's suppression of secular oppositions."⁴¹ This analysis of Islamic resurgence is grossly misleading. In fact, the governments in Algeria, Turkey and Egypt mercilessly crushed the Islamists. The results of elections in Algeria, in which the Islamic Salvation Front emerged victorious, were annulled by the government and the front brutally crushed. In Egypt, the leader of Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan-ul-Bana was murdered in fifties and in 1964, its intellectual father Syed Qutb was sent to gallows. What happened to Islamists in Turkey is an open secret. Ironically Huntington mentions the name of Israel as well. One is at loss to understand when and why Israel encouraged and supported Islamists. While unknowingly contradicting the above statement, Huntington himself writes a few pages later that in 1998 Crown Prince Abdullah of

Saudi Arabia termed the rise of Islamic Fundamentalism the greatest threat to his country.⁴²

Huntington like other Western writers harbors biased attitude towards the religion of Islam. He is perturbed at the head coverings of Muslim women. To the best of my knowledge nuns do shave off their heads and wear scarves as religious symbols but their head-coverings has never disturbed any Christian or Jewish observer in the West.

Huntington's biased attitude towards Islam is further evident from his contention that Islam is intrinsically incompatible with democracy. For example, he writes, "The general failure of liberal democracy to take hold in Muslim Societies is continuing and repeated phenomenon for an entire century beginning in the late 1800s. This failure has its source at least in part in the inhospitable nature of Islamic culture and society to Western liberal concepts."⁴³ Whereas he writes at another place that democratization was most successful in countries where Christian and Western influences were strong. This is typical Western biased attitude towards Islam. It always views Islam as intolerant, undemocratic and non pluralist ideology while on the other hand all lofty principles and ideals of democracy, human rights and religious diversity are attributed to Christianity. It is misleading that Islam is inherently opposed to democracy, religious plurality and human rights. If democracy is not meant for legalizing gay marriages and allowing people to walk naked, then Islam is for democracy. The essence of democracy, in fact, lies in a government by consultation and with the consent of the people. It was Islam which pioneered this kind of government fourteen hundred years back. We have discussed it elsewhere that how Islam searches unity in diversity. Islamic civilization is essentially an accommodative and assimilative civilization. It has

always absorbed and assimilated positive things from other civilizations. Some Western authors have, therefore, called it Islamic eclecticism.⁴⁴

Huntington has wrongly identified Islamaization and indigenization.⁴⁵ Islamic resurgence is in fact an attempt to revive the universal appeal and message of Islam. Whereas indigenization is a return to the local culture and values. Indigenization is a reaction against Westernization. On the other hand Islamic resurgence can not be identified with reactionary ideologies. Islam has remained politically dominant for more than one thousand years, and is still directing the lives of one-fourth of human race. It may have lost its political appeal at times but its appeal as a living religion and way of life has always been intense throughout the fourteen centuries of its life. Huntington considers Islamic resurgence a transitory phenomenon. He writes, “No religious revival or cultural movement, lasts indefinitely, and at some point Islamic resurgence will subside and fade in to history. That is most likely to happen when the demographic impulse powering it weakens in the 2nd and 3rd decade of 21st of century. At that time, the ranks of militants, warriors and migrants will diminish, and the high levels of conflict within Islam and between Muslims.” He further writes, “The resurgence will also have shown that “Islam is the solution” to the problems of morality, identity, meaning and faith, but not to the problems of social injustice, political repression, economic backwardness and military weakness. These failures could generate wide spread disillusionment with political Islam, a reaction against it, and search for alternative “solutions” to these problems.”⁴⁶

Here, Huntington has miserably failed to understand the true essence of Islam. As explained else where Islam does not divide life into water tight compartments of matter and spirit. “Islam is not a religion in

the common, distorted meaning of the word, confining its scope to the private life of a man” writes Professor Khurshid Ahmad. “it is a complete way of life, catering for all the fields of human existence, Islam provides guidance for all walks of life- individual and social, material and moral, economic and political, legal and cultural, national and international. The Quran enjoins man to enter the fold of Islam without reservation into follow God’s guidance in all fields of life.”⁴⁷ If these are the true teachings of Islam, how can Islamic resurgence fade and relegate religion to the private lives of Muslims. It would, for all practical purposes, be the death of vibrant, vigorous, dynamic and all encompassing concept of Islam. The Western intelligentsia and academia have, knowingly or unknowingly, failed to appreciate the true nature of Islam. They have, therefore, coined the terminology of political Islam and the Islamic resurgence movements are labeled as fundamentalists and extremists. This division of Muslims into moderates and fundamentalists is mischievous and we the Muslims have very easily fallen into this snare by accepting these terminologies. The terminology of fundamentalism originated in the Christian world. In 1828, the Millenarian Movement spread in the Church of England and influenced some Evangelicals and Catholic Brethrens. This movement reached America in 1870 and influenced the followers of Pentacostalists, Presbyterian and Baptist Church. These people were waiting for the second coming of Jesus Christ and believed that the Church age has started. Some fundamentalists even announced the expected date of his arrival.⁴⁸ They believed that before his arrival the temple of Solomon must be built and hence a Jewish state came into being. Another belief due to which they were termed fundamentalist was the literal acceptance of Bible without any rational interpretation. It also believed in the

rejection of every new thing and termed it against the fundamental postulates of Christ. This movement, therefore, vehemently opposed all scientific theories. This terminology was used in 1957 for Islamic revivalism in Middle East Journal. Unfortunately, academia and intelligentsia in Muslims world have accepted this terminology without giving it a critical thought. They have failed to appreciate that the label fundamentalism can be very easily applied to the above Christian sects, but it can not be used for Islam, a religion which invites mankind to look within himself and around himself time and again. The pages of Holy Quran are replete with the words “thinking”, “pondering”, “understanding”, “analyzing”, “observing”, “reasoning”, “and arguing”. These words have been used more than 200 times, inviting man to use his different faculties of mind and body to find out the ultimate truth. The Holy Quran is not a static and closed book like Bible, which refuses to offer itself for liberal interpretations. The Holy Quran, unlike the Bible, has been interpreted by Muslim thinkers from different angles down the ages. Some have written about its literary beauties, others took to the deduction of juristic legal, scientific and moral postulates from its words. The writings of countless commentaries of the Holy Quran are an ample proof that its followers can not be termed as blind, narrow and bigoted fundamentalists.

The Islamic revivalist movements have been, wrongly, blamed for opposing modernism. Because Muslim revivalist always talk of return to the principles of life and governance laid down by the Holy Prophet and his truthful successors. Westerners call it fundamentalism and conservatism, and those nations who refuse to assimilate Western values are considered aliens and less civilized. For example, Huntington

writes, “only when Muslims explicitly accept the Western model, will they be in a position to technicalize and then to develop.”

The Source of the Present Discontent and Way Forward

Huntington, like majority of Western intellectuals, has failed to appreciate the true source of the present discontent. It is not the failure of economics or population bulge which has forced the angry Muslim youth to resort to violence. It is rather the present world order which is unjust and deeply tilted towards the stronger nations. Muslim were either kept colonized throughout 19th and 20th century and when at last they got liberated, they were deprived of real freedom. Muslim lands are still under occupation of Israel, US, Russia and India. Moreover, as the global efforts to administer justice and fair play, envisioned in the U.N. charter, have failed, and deprived nations are, therefore, constrained to fall in the regional pacts or arrangements for self protection and survival, it looks as if the clash of civilizations is in the making.

Coupled with apathy of Muslim rulers and deep sense of deprivation, they are up in arms against this unjust order. Faced with an enemy which is armed to the teeth with sophisticated weapons, they have no other option but to resort to the tactics of martyr operations.

At the heart of this whole conflict lies the American intransigence and arrogance. America’s support for Israel and her double standard regarding democracy through out the last 60 years has added fuel to this fire. Supporting the oil rich sheikhdoms against the wishes of people and keeping them in power for her interest has generated a sense of alienation in the whole of Middle East. Her support for Afghan Jihad and then terming the same jihadies, terrorist is just loathsome. The perpetrators of American led war on terror and self appointed guardians of the world have put the whole Muslim world on fire. America and her

allies have miserably failed to differentiate between genuine freedom movements and terrorism. They have failed to come forward with an acceptable definition of terrorism. “America’s so called war on terror has failed her own definition of the phenomenon”. Noam Chomsky writes, “a U.S. army manual defined terrorism as” the calculated use of violence or threat of violence to attain goals that are political, or ideological in nature.....through intimidation, coercion, or instilling fear.” The British government definition is similar:” Terrorism is the use, or threat, of action which is violent, damaging, or disrupting, and is intended to influence the government or intimidate the public and is for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, or ideological cause.” Noam Chomsky writes,” The reliance on these definitions is particularly appropriate for our purpose because they were formulated when the first war on terror was declared. But now no one use them, and they have been rescinded, replaced by nothing sensible. The reasons do not seem obscure: the official definition of terrorism is virtually the same as the definition of counterterrorism (sometimes called “low-intensity conflict,” or “counterinsurgency”). But counter terror is official US policy, and it plainly will not do to say that the US is officially committed to terrorism. The US is not alone in this practice. It is traditional for states to call their own terrorism” counter terror,” even the worst mass murderers: the Nazis, for example.” Noam Chomsky further writes that another problem in definition of terrorist is that it follows from it that US is a leading terrorist state that much is hardly controversial, at least among those who believe that we should pay some attention to such institution such as international court of justice or the UN security council, or main stream scholarship as the examples of Nicaragua and Cuba unequivocally reveal. But that conclusion won’t do either. So we are left with no

sensible definitions of terrorism, unless we decide to break rank and use the official definitions that have been abandoned because of their unacceptable consequences”. He writes further, “the official definitions do not answer every question precisely. They do not, for example, draw a sharp boundary between international terrorism and aggression, or between terror and resistance. These issues have arisen in interesting ways, which have direct bearing on the redeclared war on terror and today’s headlines.

Take the distinction between terror and resistance. One question that arises is the legitimacy of actions to realize “the right to self determination, freedom, and independence, as derived from the charter of UN, of people forcibly deprived of that right-particularly peoples under colonial and racist regimes and foreign occupations”. Do such actions fall under terror or resistance? The quoted words are from the most forcible denunciation of the crime of terrorism by the UN General Assembly, which stated further that “nothing in the present resolution could in any way prejudice right” so defined. The resolutions were adopted in December 1987, just as officially recognized international terrorism reached its peak. It is obviously important. The vote was 153 to 2 (with single abstention, Honduras), hence even more important.

The two countries that voted against the resolution were the usual ones. Their reason, they explained at the UN session, was the paragraph just quoted. The phrase “colonial and racist regimes” was understood to refer their ally, apartheid South Africa. Evidently the US and Israel could not condone resistance to the apartheid regimes, particularly when it was led by Mandela’s African National Congress, one of the world’s more notorious terrorist group”, as Washington determined at that time. The other phrase, “foreign occupation,” was

understood to refer to Israel's military occupation, then in its twentieth year. Evidently, resistance could not be condoned in that case either.

The US and Israel were alone in the world in denying that such actions can be legitimate resistance, and declaring them to be terrorism. The US-Israel stand extends beyond the occupied territories. Thus the US and Israel regards Hezbollah, for example, as one of the leading terrorist organizations in the world, not because of its terrorist acts(which are real) but because it was formed to resist the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, and succeeded in driving out the invaders after two decades of defiance of Security Council orders to withdraw. The US even goes so far as to call people "terrorist" if they resist direct US aggression: the South Vietnamese, for example; or recently, the Iraqis"⁴⁹ and Afghans.

In April 2002, Britain's veteran Middle East correspondent, Robert Fisk, made a lecture tour of America. An outspoken critic of US Middle East policy, he chose a talk with the deliberately provocative title: "September 11: ask who did it, but for heaven's sake don't ask why'. And for the first time in decade of giving such lectures, he was shocked to encounter packed audiences who expressed an 'extraordinary new American refusal to go with the official lines, the growing angry awareness among Americans that they were being lied to and deceived'. Never before, he reports, had he been asked by Americans, 'how can you report the Middle East fairly?', or-much more disturbingly-'How can we make our government reflect our views?' and then there was the retired US naval officer who recounted his personal experience from the 1973 Middle East war before reflecting on Israel's 2002 invasion of Palestinian Authority territory : 'when I see on television our planes and our tanks used to attack Palestinian, I can understand why people hate

Americans.’⁵⁰ The feeling of hate, discontent, anger, and at times violent reaction in the Muslim world against the West as whole and America in particular, is, therefore, understandable.

But clash within the Muslim world is another aspect of the present discontent. Some Western scholars call it clash within Islam. Even Benazir Bhutto has gone with the argument of that school. She writes, “applied to Islam, its substantiate my position that the most significant clash of our modern era is not between Islam and the West but rather is an internal fight within Muslim states between the forces of moderation and modernity and the forces of extremism and fanaticism.”⁵¹ In fact, the real clash is not between the forces of moderation and extremism, but rather between the Westernized minority of Muslim elites and the vast majority of dispossessed and disenfranchised Muslim masses. Muslim societies are deeply polarized, not because of Islam, but due to the exploitation perpetrated by this minority ruling class. Democracy has not failed, due to its inherent incompatibility with Islam as Western intellectuals like Huntington, wrongly, believes, rather vast majority of Muslim countries have been denied this right. Even the countries, where a façade and semblance of democracy is in place, the people are disenfranchised in true sense. The Muslim ruling elite do not reflect the wishes and aspirations of their subjects. There is a huge trust deficit and gap between the rulers and the ruled. The craving among Muslims for a just socio-economic and moral order, based on the golden principles of Islam, is, therefore, not an uncalled for and unjust slogan.

Conclusion:

Now what is the way forward? Clash does exist and most of the times it turns out to be violent, but Islam does not want it to be, necessarily,

violent. It can be minimized and managed if we return to the civilizational paradigm of Islam. The religion of Islam does not accept the frame work of clash paradigm. It does not want to convert this world into a veritable hell. Islam wants to make this world a peaceful place to live in. It wants to wage war against those who spread mischief on the earth and spoil its peace. Allah Almighty says in the Holy Quran, “Permission (to fight) is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged- and, verily, God has indeed the power to succor them- those who have been driven from their homelands against all right for no other reason than their saying, “our sustainer is God”, For, if God had not enabled to defend themselves against one another, (all) Monasteries and Churches and Synagogues and Mosques- in (all of) which God’s name is abundantly extolled- who would surely have been destroyed”.⁵² So the peace of world is of paramount importance according to Islam.

Islam does not believe in war for the sake of war. Conquering lands, colonizing the world, forced conversions, hankering after money, extracting the resources of the weak and oppressed, has never been its motive for going to wars. The prime objective of war is to establish a just socio-economic and moral order, and to save humanity from dictatorial and oppressive rule. Islam never spread through sword but with the force of humanistic zeal of Muslims. “Such being the missionary zeal of the Muslims ” writes Professor Thomas Arnold, “That they are ready to speak in season and out of season- as Doughty, with fine insight, says, “their talk is continually (without hypocrisy) of religion, which is of genial devote remembrance to Them”.⁵³ ” The number of wars led by Holy Prophet or the number of war parties sent by Holy Prophet during the ten years of Jihad in Medina, had the smallest ratio of human

casualties throughout human history. During twenty seven wars mission led by Prophet himself and forty eight war parties sent by Prophet (PBUH), only 1700 people died according to the historians of Islam. Some historians have recorded a much less figure of around 1000 casualties. Whereas the numbers of minimum casualties during First World War were around 150 million⁵⁴ and the minimum number during Second World War were around 400 million.⁵⁵

Muslim Umma should, therefore, strive for a world free from injustice exploitation and dictatorship. This ideal can be achieved by adopting a two pronged strategy. First, we must put our own house in order. We should return to the guidance of Quran and Sunnah, and prepare the Muslim masses for bringing a peaceful change through popular democracy, based on the spirit of Islamic teaching. Tyrannical and dictatorial rulers have sapped the foundations of Muslim Umma. It is time to change them through peaceful popular struggle. Second, Muslim Umma should try its utmost to avoid civilizational confrontation. Minimizing and managing the clash is the need of the hour. Islam has laid down rules and principles for interaction with other religions and civilizations. The jurists of Islam have dealt with this subject extensively. We should, therefore, search for guidance in it to confront the present crisis. Third element that may be underscored is that it is always weakness that invites invasion. Hence the Quranic injunctions that Muslims should keep their forces ready on war-footing so that their own enemies and the enemies of God dare not to trample upon the Muslim lands. Since we have not paid full attention to the teachings of the Quran, we are unable to force the enemy to abandon its brutal policy of war and violence. As you can see the enemy is not inclined to give us much respite. We will therefore be well-advised to realize that the clash

between the forces of evil and the forces of good is, in fact, inevitable. More precisely, we are already crawling in its midst. Peace, for sure, can't be established in the absence of balance of power. The enemy being equipped with the most devastating and most sophisticated war-technology and being bent upon subjecting the Muslims to a state of "shock and awe" cannot be expected to come to sanity by our humanistic and moralistic appeals for peace. This can be done only by equalizing terror with terror. Fourthly a comprehensive struggle for the resurgence of the Muslims is our urgent need. We can address ourselves to this need by reassuring ourselves that Islam has come to prevail over all other religions and civilizations and is not destined to be subjugated by them. As a mid-most nation our primary duty is to strive for the establishment of just socio-moral order in this world. If we do our job, we can expect the blessings of God for success here and salvation in the hereafter. We should just rebuild our faith in God (and His Prophet) and hope for the best!

End Notes:

¹ Huntington, p. Samuel, 1997, *The Clash of Civilizations and The Remaking of World Order*, India, Penguin Books, P.19.

² *ibid*, P.20.

³ *ibid*, P.21.

⁴ *ibid*, P.42.

⁵ *ibid* P.125.

⁶ Fukayama, Francis, 2002, *The End of History and The Last Man*, New York, Perennial An Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, P.XI.

⁷ *ibid*, P.XII.

⁸ Spengler, *The decline of West 1818*, quoted in Bhutto, Benazir, 2008, *Reconciliation- Islam, Democracy and the West*, London, New York, Simon and Schuster, P.233-34.

⁹ *ibid*, P.235.

¹⁰ "The Roots of Muslim Rage", by Bernard Luis, available at: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/16634100/The-Roots-of-Muslim-Rage> (23-11-2009).

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¹² "Building new bogeymen: The Clash of Civilizations and Remaking of World Order", by Walt, Stephen, available at: <http://acme.highpoint.edu/~msetzler/IntlSecReads/HuntingClashCritique.pdf>, (22,11,2009)

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¹⁵ Bhutto, Benazir, 2008, *Reconciliation- Islam, Democracy and the West*, London, New York, Simon and Schuster, P.261.

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¹⁸ Assad, Muhammad, 2001, *Islam at the Crossroads*, New Delhi, Good Word Books, P.12.

¹⁹ *ibid*, P.13.

²⁰ Huntington, *The Clash*, Op. Cit.P.40.

²¹ *ibid*, P.41.

²² *ibid*, P.42.

²³ Muadodi, Abul Ala, 2008, *Islami Tahzeeb Aur Uskay Usool Wa Mabadi*, Lahore, Islamic Publications (Pvt.) Ltd., Pp. 10-13.

²⁴ Ghazi, Mahmood, Ahmad, 2009, *Mahazirat-e-Shariat*, Lahore, Al-Faisal Nasharan, P.488.

²⁵ "The Roots of Muslim Rage", by Bernard Luis, available at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/199009/muslim-rage> (16-12-09).

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- ²⁶ Qutab, Sayed, 1997, *Fei-Zulial-Quran*, Vol. 3, Lahore, Idara Manshorate Islami, P. 209.
- ²⁷ *ibid*, P.210.
- ²⁸ Muadodi, Abul Ala, 2002, *Al Jihad Fil Islam*, Lahore, Idara Tarjoman Ul Quran, P.222.
- ²⁹ *ibid*, PP.224-232.
- ³⁰ Ghazi, Mahmood, Ahmad, July-Dec. 2009, Vol. 6, No.2, *Islamic Sharia and the Question of Minorities, Policy Perspective*, Institute of Policy Study Islamabad.
- ³¹ *Ibid*;
- ³² Hamidullah, Muhammad, 2005, *Muhammad Rasool-ulllah(SWA)*, Lahore, Bacon Books, P.122.
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- ³⁶ Arnold W., Thomas, 2001, *The Spread of Islam in the World*, New Delhi, Goodword Books, P.2-3.
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- ⁴⁰ Zakaria, *The Future*, *Op.cit*. P.136-37.
- ⁴¹ Huntington, *The Clash* , *Op.cit*.Pp.114-15.
- ⁴² *ibid*, p.119.
- ⁴³ *ibid*, P.114.
- ⁴⁴ Ghazi, Mahazirat, *Op.cit*. P.492.
- ⁴⁵ Huntington, *The Clash*, *Op.cit*. P.116.
- ⁴⁶ *ibid*, P.120.
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⁵⁴ List of Wars and disasters by Death Toll”, available
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⁵⁵ *ibid.*