

**INTERCIVILIZATIONAL COOPERATION :
THE ISLAMIC ALTERNATIVE TO THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS**

Prof. Hamidatou Mostefa

Teacher of Hadith and its sciences

Islamic studies Institute

Echahid Hamma Lakhdar University ELOued

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Most Merciful

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds,

INTRODUCTION

(INTERCIVILIZATIONAL COOPERATION : THE ISLAMIC ALTERNATIVE TO THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS)

I would like to start by quoting the verse from the Holy koran , the translation of which is as follows :

« who listen to the Words and follow what is finest of it. These are they whom Allah has guided. They are those of understanding.»
(Azzumar – Verse No: 18) .

I think this verse is really the best guideline for Inter-civilizational cooperation . It suggests that we have to choose the best.

Based on the above mentioned , I will address the subject in accordance with the following elements :

- 1- How real is the Islamic threat ?
- 2- Islam's position toward the clash of civilizations.
 - Islam and its civilization in the eyes of western writers
 - The rise and fall of civilizations
 - Human beings as the core of civilizations
 - Characteristics which are vital for civilizational

cooperation

3- index

How real is the Islamic threat¹ ?

After the fall of communism and the Western triumph in the cold war, some elements have started voicing concern about a new threat to the global order from “ radical Islam”.

The old guard Orientalists, pro-west “moderate” leader in some Muslim countries and a large number of Arab-Muslim bashers (opponents) in the intellectual circles in the west have been fanning the fear of Islam, each to defend and promote its own interests.

The strategic value of some of the Muslim countries formerly aligned to the west has considerably weakened due to the global transformations in the power relations during the last decade of the twentieth century.

After losing the soviet card , they are raising the specter of Islamic “fundamentalism” to make them-selves relevant to the western interests.

This attempt argues that the rise of Islamic political movements is a response to the failure of post-colonial nationalist governments to provide good governance.

Most of these regimes now base on forcible means to controle troubled populations.

Thus aggravating their legitimacy crisis.

By suppressing the growth of even the most moderate of secular, democratic groups, they have unintentionally encouraged the rightness of Islamist influences.

Consequently, the Islamist groups by appropriating the nationalist, anti-imperialist agenda, appear to present themselves as the only political alternative to the widely unpopular, pro-west dictatorial regims.

The Islamits have proved more perfect in developing political organizations than their traditionalist or even modern democrat

¹ - Rzsul Bakhsh Rais the clash of civilizations – special issue –strategic studies, a quarterly journal of the institute of strategic studies , Islamabad (p :64-65) vol :18 Autumn 1995

concurrants.

They have effectively used the Mosques,
and modern educational institutions to raise a proficient party cadre.

The new Islamists are highly educated , are exposed to contemporary ideological discourse, and have entered all modern professions .

These Islamists have paid far greater attention to building institutions in civil society, In line with political objectives. These institutions range from student organizations , trade unions, and professional associations to well-funded benevolent networks.

I will raise the following questions:

- How broad-based and popular are the Islamist groups?
- Will they be able to secure democratic majorities?
- Do the islamists pose any threat to western interests?
- Are the islamists equipped with an ideology that is suitable to complete whith liberal democracy at global level?

To my mind is that although Islam is a significant force in Muslim societies, the mass support for the Islamist groups varies greatly.

Much would depend on the local cultural influences, the level of indigenous institutionalization, history and nature of political movements, cumulative democratic experiences, and the character of the state.

Therefore, the rise or decline of the Islamic parties and movements must be seen in the specific social and political context of each Islamic country.

Experiencially , lumping all the Islamic movements together would be a great mistake.

They widely differ on they visions of an Islamic state, interpretation of the Islamic law, and the question of political strategy.

However, they share some remarkably common perceptions of the international environment.

Three important concepts should be mentioned:

- 1-The west, according to the Islamist, is wrong kind of society.
- 2-The west does not wont them to succeed in their

struggle for political power.

3-The corrupt secular, pro-west regimes in the Islamic countries are sustained in power by the west countries.

At close look, these perception appear as faulty at the western perception of an Islamic threat.

Let us now turn to some popular western perceptions of the Islamic movements.

First: It is argued that the Islamist are philosophically opposite to the pluralistic model of liberal democracy. Once they achieve political power through democratic elections, they would terminate this process and establish dictatorship of their parties.

Second: the Islamist are characterized as obscurantists who reject modernity and capitalism.

Third: the western opponents of the Islamic movement describe a horrible picture of human rights, states of woman, minorities and secular intelligentsia under any Islamic rule. This negative Imagery has been used effectively for evolving a western policy consensus on containing the threat of Islam.

Some elements of this policy appear to be the exclusion and expulsion of the Islamist groups from the electoral process where they seem to have reasonable chances of success. Invariably, western governments have supported even violent repression of the Islamists when they threaten a close ally, or when the country is of great strategic value.

I will argue that repression of the Islamic groups, who are capable of launching armed struggle, is bound to plunge the Islamic countries into bloody civil wars. such a strategy would rather energize the Islamic movements and turn their leaders into national heroes and liberators. Alienation from power may breed extremism while allowing the islamists to share power on democratic basis may convert them into responsible partners. Moreover, it would be morally wrong and politically unwise to deny democratic rights to any group on account of its ideology

I will conclude by stressing on three points .

First: in the place of imposing western forms of economic and political organization as universal , non-western societies should be allowed to exercise their own sovereign will in choosing what is good for them . the political pluralism and multiculturalism of the western societies may be extended to the global village. In this spirit, the Islamists claim of seeking modernization and economic development through an Islamic route should be respected.

Second: modernization cannot be equated with westernization. Modernization is quite possible with out giving up cultural or civilizational and identities.

Third: strengthening of political liberalism (participatory politics, individual rights, freedoms and pluralism) would diffuse the power of the Islamists groups.

Islam's position toward the clash of civilizations.

In this section I will try to answer one key question:

Is Islam for clash of civilization or against it ?

I will argue that not only Islam is against clash of civilizations, but it supports civilizational cooperation based on universal human values.

For the purpose of this argumentation , I will deal four points:

- Islam and its civilization in the eyes of the Western writers.
- The rise and the fall of civilizations according to the Islamic teachings.
- Human beings as the core of civilizations.
- Characteristics which are vital for civilizational cooperation.

Islam and its civilization in the eyes of the Western writers

Many Western writers and Orientalists presented their related theories on the clash of civilizations:

- Bernard Louis² in The Atlantic monthly- september

² - Orientalist Jew born in London in 1916, he obtained American citizenship in 1982. Has published several books on Islam and the Middle East. One of the first who spoke about the clash of civilizations in the late fifties of the twentieth century after the Suez War. Le Figaro 4-5-2006

1990 page 47-60. Write under "The roots of Muslim rage" (جذور الغضب الإسلامي): Why so many Muslims deeply resent the West, and why their bitterness will not easily be mollified³.

- Francis Fukuyama⁴ Describes the current stage as the end of history, and that history of oppression and totalitarian regimes has gone and ended up irrevocably with the end of the Cold War Replaced by the liberal values of Western democracy, declaring the victory of Western liberal doctrine being a global ideal, while minimizing the role of ideologies, religions and other cultures in his view.

- Kenneth Neal Waltz⁵: believes that the current international system is in a transitional phase will shift to a multipolar world.

It is what we are going through now, where we move from bipolar to unipolar solid after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

- Joseph Samuel Nye⁶ goes that the international community is moving towards interdependence way in the new world order, and the West have to build a political and economic systems in order to maintain stability in the world,

³ - The Atlantic monthly- september 1990 page 47-60.

⁴ - Francis Fukuyama U.S. of Japanese descent, was born on October 27, 1952 in Chicago, USA, received his doctorate in political science from Harvard University. Professor of public policy at George Mason University. Of the highlights of his books: The End of History and the Last Man, which was published in 1992 (http://agora.qc.ca/dossiers/Francis_Fukuyama)

⁵ - Kenneth Neal Waaltz (8 June 1924-12 May 2013), a political science professor at the University of Berkeley uc.burkeley, a former president of the American Association of Political Science from 1987 to 1988, and a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Has several books about: rights - the state - the war, and others. (see: Foreign Policy 13-5-2013 by Stephen M Walt).

⁶ - Josef Samuel Nye was born on 1937 graduat from Princeton and Oxford Universities. PhD in Political sciences from Harvard University. Named as director of the international relations center in the same university , than deputy of the U.S defence ministry.(site of Harvard university school of government . 2-9-2013.

and this is the subject of his book "Power and interdependence"⁷

- Samuel P.huntington ⁸

It believes that the clash of civilizations will dominate the political scene in the future. It will be a major importance to the question of the identity , with the resurgence of religious and cultural spirit.

Also he finds that the correlation between the Islamic civilizations and Confucianism represents a direct threat to the West.⁹

Huntington's theory came in response to the theory of Fukuyama's " the end of history" and the superiority of the West, because it means that he has not left for America and the West, any enemy!!

Huntington also says : "Every civilization sees itself as a center for the world, and She writes her history like a major in the history of humanity, and maybe it was more suitable for the West than any other culture "¹⁰

The same author mentions that:

Some Westerners, including the president, "Clinton," says: there is no conflict between Islam and the west.

The problem exist only with some Islamic extremists. Fourteen centuries of history says otherwise. Relations between Islam and Christianity, both Orthodox or Western was heated. Both were the "other" for the last.

The twentieth century conflict between liberal democracy and Marxist-Leninism was only a fleeting and superficial phenomenon,

⁷ - Power and interdependence- Robert Owen Keohane & Joseph.S.Nye- Scott Foresman- usa 1989.

⁸ - Philip Samuel Huntington was born on April 18, 1927, and died on December 24, 2008. Renowned political scientist, received his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1951. Professor and then dean of Harvard Academy for International Studies. He has a lot of studies, notably (the clash of civilizations). The New York Times 28-12-2008. By Tamar Lewin

⁹ - Le Choc des civilisations. S.P.Huntington. Adil Jacob 1997 Paris. Page 10.

¹⁰ - Clash of Civilizations - Samuel Huntington P: 90 translation by Talaat Chaib 1998 Egyptian National Library.

When compared to the deep conflict between Islam and Christianity.¹¹

- Mariano Aguirre Determines the destination clearly when he says: Who is the opponent who will take the place of the defeated communism in the eyes of the West?

It seems that the political geography and Strategists that Islam is the main enemy at the end of the century (the twentieth century), and in order to confront it hardly, the conservative intellectuals put a theory of clash of civilizations.¹²

These are the positions and orientations of the Orientalists and Western thinkers In regards to Islam and Islamic civilization.

According to their theories, they explain the centrality of Western civilization.

What is the position of Islam towards those civilizations?

Islam put the curriculum to be followed In this issue.

Allah says:

“ Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice, and debate with them in the most dignified manner. Your Lord is aware of those who stray from His path, and He is aware of those who are guided.”

(ادع إلى سبيل ربك بالحكمة والموعظة الحسنة وجادلهم بالتي هي أحسن ° إن ربك هو أعلم بمن

ضل عن سبيله ° وهو أعلم بالمهتدين) النحل 125

And says:” And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in the best manner possible, except those who do wrong among them. And say, “We believe in what was revealed to us, and in what was revealed to you; and our God and your God is One; and to Him we are submissive.” (al-'Ankabut 46)

(ولا تجادلوا أهل الكتاب إلا بالتي هي أحسن ° إلا الذين ظلموا منهم ° وقولوا آمنا بالذي أنزل إلينا

¹¹ - Ibid p :338

¹² - Le monde diplomatique decembre 1994 N° 489 page 25

وأُنزل إليكم وإلهنا وإلهكم واحد ونحن له مسلمون) العنكبوت 46

I think that these verses serves as a guide for the cooperation between civilizations. They suggests the need to choose the better

With this introduction ,in my presentation i will try to answer one key question : is islam for clash of civilizations or against it ? i will argue that not only islam is against clash of civilizations , but it supports civilizational cooperation based on universal human values. for the purpose of this argumentation, i have divided my presentation into three parts : in the first part , i have analyzed the rise and the fall of civilization according to Islamic teachings : in the second part :Human beings as the core of civilization , and in the third part , i have discussed those characteristics which are vital for civilizational cooperation.

THE RISE AND FALL OF CIVILIZATIONS

A civilization is an entity, composed of religion, culture, politics, trade, technology, family life, social history, leadership, values, ethics and epsimology. islamic scholars and thinkers have offered various analysis on civilizations and their life cycles (early formation, growth, maturity and decline).there are some references to the issue of civilizational life cycle in the HOLY KORAN. Al-farabi , al-beiruni, ibn-rushd and ibn-khaldun have done remarkable research on civilizations. For exemple, ibn-khaldun in his famous “introduction” has discussed mutual relations and interactions between nomadic and urban lives. In his analysis on the “rise and the fall of nations” he has paid attention to geographical, natural, religious, racial and social elements. Furthermore, he discusses in depth the reason behind the rise and fall of civilizations.¹³

In my view, islam believes that civilizations have certain life cycles – they emerge, grow, become mature and then decline.

“how many were the gardens and springs they left behind and corn-fields and noble buildings pleasant things wherein they had taken

13- تاريخ ابن خلدون- دار إحياء التراث العربي، بيروت ط4 - 170/1 -

such delight. Thus was their end and we made other people inherit (those things)". Ad dokhan (the smoke) verse no : (24-27)

(كم تركوا من جنات وعيون وزروع ومقام كريم ونعمة كانوا فيها فاكهين ° كذلك وأورثناها قوما

آخرين) الدخان 24-27

Consequently, in the same pattern that ancient civilizations such as sumer, and Greek civilizations rose to their peaks and died, the other civilizations have the same destiny. This is a natural and universal law. In the Koranic paradigm, none of the human civilizations and social systems will be perpetual and everlasting. The one who is permanent and everliving is ALLAH (God) who has bestowed free-will and power to decide to his best creature, the humun being. It is the human being who makes and destroys civilization with his free-will. The fall of civilizations in Koranic perspective is the resultant effect of three phenomena:

- 1) The tyranny of oppressory and the government of injustice.
- 2) Economic pressures and deficiencies.
- 3) Cultural and ethical disorder and imbalance.

These phenomena will destroy any civilization. Here i would like to mention two verses from Holy Koran which demonstrate these trends and modes of behaviour. Their translation is as follows:

- "how many populations have we destroyed which were given to wrong doing? They tumbled down on their roots and how many wells are lying idle and neglected and costless lofty and well-build?"

"Al-Hajj" Verse No. 46

"وكأين من قرية أهلكناها وهي ظالمة ثم أخذناها ° وإليّ المصير"

الحج 46

- "when we decide to destroy a town we command those among them who are given the good things of this life to be obedient, but they continued to transgress; so that the word is proved true against them and we destroy them utterly". ("Bani israil" Verse No.16)

" وإذا أردنا أن نهلك قرية أمرنا مترفيها ففسقوا فيها فحق عليها القول فدمرناها تدميرا "

الإسراء: ١٦

This pattern is applicable to Muslim civilizations as well. In this regard the Abbasides, Ottomans, Muslim Mongols in west Asia, fatimides in Egypt civilizations are good examples. Regardless of their Muslim cultures and identities, these civilizations died due to their misbehaviour and misuse of power. Thus. We easily come to this conclusion that the human beings are at the heart of civilizations

HUMAN BEINGS AS THE CORE OF CIVILIZATIONS ¹⁴

In Islamic teachings the most important part of civilization is human being , and pays a significant attention to individuals and individuality.

Islam is of the belief that if each one of the individuals is correctified, society will be on the right path. I believe that Islam deals with the soul of people in their individuality.

The central element in civilization according to the holy Koran , is human being and spirituality. Man creates civilization; civilization is a creature not the creator. Man shapes civilization based on his nature and his needs. In Islamic civilizational discours , moral principles has special position. It covered all our actions and interactions in daily life.

Characteristics which are vital to civilizational cooperation :

The unique and exclusive talent of Islam is that it incorporated all positive elements of all previous cultures and civilizations and directed them in a proper way.

In the same line , Islam rejected whatever was negative « choosing the best ».

Conclusion :

Let me summarize my remarks in three points :

- Civilisations can enrich each other . They are not clashing each

¹⁴ - See in this subject :Abbas Maliki- the clash of civilizations – special issue – strategic studies,a quarterly journal of the institute of strategic studies , Islamabad (p :20-25) vol :18 Autumn 1995

other.

- The collapse of civilizations is from within. They do not collapse because of collision with other civilizations.
- Human societies should not be divided along the civilizational identities.

INDEX

- 1- Islamic Activism and U.S. Foreign Policy by Scott. Hibbard & David Little 1 september 1997
- 2- Le Choc des civilisations. S.P.Huntington. Adil Jacob 1997 Paris.
- 3- www.Larousse.Fr/encyclopedia/Montesquieu
- 4- Power and interdependence -Robert Owen Keohane & Joseph.S.Nye-Scott Foresman – USA 1989
- 5- A Literary History of the Arabs By Reynold Nicholson at the cambridge university press 1966
- 6- (http://agora.qc.ca/dossiers/Francis_Fukuyama)
- 7- Le Figaro 04-5-2006
- 8- The Atlantic monthly – September 1990
- 9- Foreign policy 13-5-2013 (Stephen .M.Walt)
- 10- Site of Harvard Kennedy school 2-9-2013
- 11- The clash of civilizations – S.P.Huntington – translated by Talaat Chaib 1998 Egyptian National Library.
- 12- La Monde diplomatique – December 1994- N°489.
- 13- Strategic Studies –Special issue-The clash of civilizations-Autumn 1995 VOL:18 –A quarterly Journal of the institute of strategic studies Islamabad.
- 14- The New York Times 28-12-2008.