The notion of a clash of civilizations has been with us for some time. British historian Arnold Toynbee used the term in a series of lectures he delivered in 1953. In an article published in 1990, Bernard Lewis wrote that the Muslim rage against the West is “no less than a clash of civilizations” (Lewis, 1990, p 60).

Samuel P. Huntington, a Harvard University political science professor, has given new currency to the notion of a clash of civilizations. His 1993 article on the topic in *Foreign Affairs* has gained a global audience. Three years ago, I lectured to a political science class at Pondicherry University in Southern India. To my pleasant surprise, all the Indian students were familiar with Huntington's argument. This is more than I can say about my students at the University of West Florida. The majority of the Indian students agreed with Huntington's conclusion. The bipolar division of the world based on ideology is no longer relevant. The world was entering a new period of intense conflict among civilizations. Writes Huntington,

> It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain them most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future. (Huntington, 1993, P.22)

What is Civilization?

Civilization and culture are related concepts. A way of life is called a culture. When the culture of a people becomes complex, for example when a division of labor develops, and when it encompasses tens of millions of people, it is called a civilization. There are hundreds of cultural groups but only a handful of civilizations. “A civilization is the highest cultural grouping of a people” (Huntington, 1993). Contemporary examples of civilization include: the Western, the Islamic, the Chinese, the Hindu, the Japanese, the Slavic, Latin American, and the African.

Historians tell us that civilizations rise and fall with some frequency. Many ancient civilizations, once glorious and powerful, exist no more. Where are Rome, Greece, Egypt, Persia and Babylonia? They are on the ash heap of history. Arnold Toynbee studied 26 civilizations, and of that number only some half a dozen survive today. The Chinese and the Hindu civilizations, however, are unique in their longevity. They go back 4,000 years or even longer. The Hindu Brahmins chant hymns from the Vedas composed at least 2,000 years before the birth of Christ. This is an amazing record of continuity for a civilization. In contrast, Islam has the shortest history at 1,400 years. Some have argued that the relative youth of Islam is the cause of its
belligerence. Islam is said to be in its adolescence. I do not agree with these views.

WHY A CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS?

First, differences among civilizations are "basic." They involve history, language, culture, social life and religion. Religious differences are perhaps the most fundamental. Different civilizations have different views about the nature of Godhead (male or female, personal or impersonal, benevolent or malevolent), the nature of man (an evolutionary creature or created in final form, godlike or beast-like), and relations between God and man (intimate and friendly, or distant and authoritarian). Civilizations also differ with respect to the concept of the state, liberty, democracy, secularism, pluralism, tolerance and the rule of law. Civilizations develop over centuries. Differences among them are deep seated and will not quickly disappear (Huntington, 1993)

Second, the communications and the information revolution have engulfed the globe. This revolution is a two edged sword. On the one hand, the increased communications among peoples tends to narrow their cultural gap. People the world over begin to look, think and act alike. On the other hand, people become more aware of their own culture and how their culture differs from others. Muslims become more of Muslims, Hindus more of Hindus, Slavic more Slavic and so on. People react to the globalizing influence by going back to their roots. Omar Sheikh, the accused murderer of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl was born and educated in England but found home in Islamic fundamentalism.

Third, modernization erodes local identities. The world over, people have lost affinity for the village, the neighborhood and the family. Fundamentalist religious movements have captured the space vacated by the village, the clan and the family. A personal illustration: I grew up in a small village in the state of Punjab in North India during a serene period 50 years ago. People then thought of themselves as belonging more to the village and less to religion. In a recent visit to my native village, I found that religious differences had assumed nefarious importance. My village has Sikh majority, and Hindu families have left the village and migrated to nearby Hindu majority towns.

CRITIQUE

I agree with much of what Huntington says. The world conflict today appears to be civilizational in nature and scope. However, Huntington's argument is flawed in two ways.

One, civilizations are not monolithic. They encompass a great deal of cultural and political diversity. The West is divided not only among Catholics, Protestants and Jews, but also between Europe and North America. Catholics and Protestants still fight in Northern Ireland. Political differences between the European Union and the United States have increased. Europe and America do not see eye-to-eye on policy towards Israel or Iraq. Europe is much more critical of Israel and its recent incursions into Palestinian territory and more sympathetic to the Palestinians. Europe also does not support Bush's warlike stance against the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq.

Hinduism is similarly divided between the North and the South, and between secularists and
Islam is even more fractured: Sunni versus Shia, Wahabis versus mainline Muslims, secularists versus fundamentalists, the Arab versus the Turkish. The bloodiest conflict of the second half of the 20th century is the decade long war between Iran (Shia) and Iraq (Sunni governed).

My second disagreement with Huntington concerns the nature of the civilizational conflict. Huntington argues that the coming world conflict will be between “the West and the rest.” The “rest” includes the entire non-Western world.

The central axis of world politics is likely to be the conflict between “the West and the rest,” and the responses of non-Western civilizations to Western power and values.

I do not think so. There is little likelihood of the global conflict to become a war of West versus the non-West. The non-Western world is not unified against the West. In a civilizational war, the U.S. may well have non-Western allies in Japan and India.

My Hypothesis

It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in the new world will be between radical Islam and greater part of the rest of humanity. Radical Islam is at war with every other religious sect and culture. Militant Islamic anger is directed against Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Slavs and animists. Examine below the list of groups against whom radical Muslims wage war:

- Roman Catholics on Mindanao in the Philippines
- Roman Catholics on Timor in Indonesia
- Confucians and Buddhists in Singapore and Malaysia
- Hindus in Bangladesh
- Hindus in Kashmir and within India itself
- Russian Orthodox Catholics in Chechnya
- Armenian Christians in Nagorno-Karabakh
- Maronite Christians in Lebanon
- Jews in Israel and in all other places
- Animists and Christians in Sudan
- Ethiopian Orthodox Christians in Eritrea
- Greek Orthodox Catholics in Cyprus
- Slavs in Bosnia, Kosovo and Albania
- Coptic Christians in Egypt
- Ibos in Nigeria
- United States
- Moderate Islamic Regimes in Egypt, Jordan and Turkey

Militant Islam is in ferment everywhere. “The Islamic world has bloody borders.” Why is this so? The explanation may lie in Islamic theology, Islamic history, and the economics of oil.
ISLAMIC THEOLOGY

Islamic militancy arises out of its theology. The tenets of Islamic theology may be stated as follows.

There is no other God but Allah  
And Mohammad is the Messenger of Allah

La Ilaha Ill Allah  
wa Anna Mohammad Ar-Rasul Allah

Lesser prophets are admitted in Islam. Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jesus and other Jewish prophets are recognized, but Mohammad is Final. He is the Seal of the prophets.

Islam claims to be a “complete” and a “completed” religion. Islamic God Allah is jealous. He brooks no rivals. He claims sole sovereignty. He proclaims Jihad or Holy War on unbelievers, kafirs.

It is obvious that this theology of a single God, a single prophet, a single revelation, a single church or ummah, a single life and a single judgment, leads to intolerance. Islamic intolerance is built into Islamic theology.

More important is the doctrine of Mohammad as the Final and the Most Perfect messenger of God and woe to him who questions his legitimacy. A person who criticizes Mohammad is at risk of losing his or her life on charges of heresy.

Ba Khuda Diwana Bash, wa Ba Mohammad Hoshiyar  
A critic of Allah may be excused for being a fool, but beware of criticizing the Prophet.

Salman Rushdie made the mistake of criticizing Mohammad in a fictional account, The Satanic Verses. The Iranian Islamic regime issued a Fatwa on his life and Rushdie has spent most of the last twenty-five years in hiding.

Not all Muslims read the Quran the same way. There are passages in the Quran which preach religious tolerance. For example, one of the verses says: “There is no compulsion in religion.” And, again, “To you your religion and to me mine.” Moderate Muslims emphasize the tolerant nature of their religion. Extremists, however, have outflanked the moderates and tend to dominate the religious dialog in the Islamic world today.

Christian theology is similar to Islamic theology in many respects. Christianity also posits the doctrine of a Single Jealous God, and of the Only Begotten Son. The history of Christianity is dotted with periods of persecution of non-Christians. The Spanish Inquisition of the 16th century was an extreme case of this intolerance.

Christianity however was reformed during the Age of Rationalism. Secularism arose and gradually the Church and the state were separated. Tolerance of religious diversity became the
norm. The West has come a long way in accepting pluralism in matters of religious belief. Christian churches and Jewish Synagogues now exist side by side in the West. Non-Western religions such as Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism have been allowed to establish their places of worship in the West. I learned that in Britain alone, there are 1,500 Islamic Mosques. The so-called New Age or New Thought churches (Unity, Unitarians, Science of Mind, and Practical Christianity) are a rapidly growing phenomenon in the West. These New Age religions borrow a great deal of their theology from the East, especially from Hinduism and Buddhism. The doctrines of Karma, reincarnation, meditation, and yoga are now widely accepted. Vegetarianism has gained ground. The notion of a female Deity is not a strange concept.

Pre-Christian and pre-Islamic people were generally tolerant of religious diversity. Hindus, Confucians, Taoists, Shintoists, European Celts, Platonists, and Pythagoreans believed in an inclusive godhead. The older traditions generally recognized many prophets and teachers as being authentic. Many paths to spiritual salvation were recognized and validated. One can climb the mountain peak by taking one of the several paths. By their very nature, the pre-Christian and pre-Islamic religions were tolerant of diversity.

Hindu India illustrates the extent of religious tolerance in its history. Christianity came to India with St. Thomas in the first century A.D., long before it became popular in the West. Judaism came to India after the Jewish temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. and the Jews were expelled from their homeland. Both Christians and Jews have existed in a predominant Hindu India for centuries without being persecuted. In a recent book titled WHO ARE THE JEWS OF INDIA? (University of California Press, 2000), author Nathan Katz observes that India is the only country where the Jews were not persecuted: “The Indian chapter is one of the happiest of the Jewish Diaspora.” p. 4.

In the 7th and 8th centuries, Zoroastrians or Parsees from Persia (present Iran) entered India to flee Islamic conquest. The Parsees are an affluent community in the city of Bombay in Western India without a sense of having been persecuted. Among the richest business families in India are the Parsees; for example, the Parsee Tata family controls a huge industrial empire. Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the powerful Prime Minister of India, was married to Feroz Gandhi, a Parsee (no relation to Mahatma Gandhi).

The history of China and Japan is similar to that of India in matters of religious tolerance. Buddhism was introduced into China from India peacefully. There is no record of armed conflict between Buddhism and native Chinese religious traditions. Similarly Buddhism came to Japan peacefully. The Shinto and Buddhist traditions are well integrated in Japanese life. In a recent visit to Japan, I noticed that Shinto shrines allowed the worship of Buddhist icons. Christianity also came to Japan peacefully in the 16th century. The Jesuit missionaries were allowed to convert people to their faith. The Jesuit missionaries, however, began to teach that the traditional Japanese gods were false. This led to their persecution by the Japanese government.

ISLAMIC HISTORY

Islam may be dated to 610 AD, when Mohammad began having conversations with Archangel Gabriel. Mohammad's message one true God named Allah attracted a number of followers. But
the leaders of Mecca rejected his new teaching. Conflict ensued. In 622, Mohammad was forced to flee to Medina, some 240 miles to the North. The year of the flight, 622 AD, is significant as it marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar. Mohammad became the leader of Medina and within a few years felt emboldened to raid Meccan caravans. Mohammad's actions were brilliant and bold. Mecca signed a treaty of friendship and allowed Muslims to enter the city for pilgrimage. This treaty, however, was abrogated two years later. Muhammad felt free to attack and he captured Mecca in a courageous move. He was now an unchallenged leader. By the time Mohammad died in 632 AD at age 62, he had become the supreme figure in all of Arabia.

Muslim raids did not stop with the death of Mohammad. Within two years, the holy warriors attacked and conquered Byzantium and Persia, the two powerful empires of the period. They were fired with religious zeal and also dreams of acquiring fabulous wealth. “It seemed that, armed with faith in Allah, nothing could stop the soldiers of Islam” (Pipes, 2001). In 712, Arabs captured Sindh on the frontiers of India. In 715 they reached Spain after conquering North Africa.

In less than 100 years since Mohammad's death, the Islamic rule stretched from the frontiers of India all the way to Spain. Victories resumed after a hiatus of three centuries. Believers captured Anatolia (Turkey) in 1071, the throne of Delhi in 1201, and Constantinople in 1453.

Muslims felt that they had Divine hand supporting their cause. As Daniel Pipes observes, “Islam's rapid rise from obscurity to international empire had a touch of the miraculous for Muslims; how could they have attained all this without God's approval and support?” (Pipes, 2001). The fabulous military victories demonstrated to the faithful God's pleasure with their ways and displeasure with the ways of the infidel.

Islam's explosive beginning has implications for modern politics. Memory of early conquest has given to the Muslim faith in his cause. Setbacks are temporary. Eventual world dominion is assured. Early success meant that Muslims did not need to negotiate with the infidel.

THE NATURE OF ISLAMIC CONQUEST

Islamic conquest was accompanied with much destruction, and the enslaving of women and children. I give below the account of one such conquest.

In the year 1,000, Mahmud Gaznavi descended on the plains of North India like a typhoon, pillaging and massacring on his way. Mahmud was a zealous Muslim who felt it to be a duty as well as pleasure to slay idolaters. He was also greedy of treasure. Mahmud accumulated vast amounts of plunder from the destruction of dozens of Hindu temples. The following account of his raids is based on the description of Alberuni, the Islamic scholar who accompanied Mahmud to India.

Mathura, the holy city of Krishna, was the next victim. ‘In the middle of the city there was a temple larger and finer than the rest, which can neither be described nor painted.’ The Sultan was of the opinion that 200 years would have been required to build it. The
idols included ‘five of red gold, each five yards high,’ with eyes formed of priceless jewels.

‘The Sultan gave orders that all the temples should be burnt with naptha and fire, and leveled with the ground.’ Thus perished works of art which must have been among the noblest monuments of ancient India. (Vincent Smith, 1985)

At the destruction of another famous temple, Somnath, it is said that 50,000 were massacred.

The Sultan also acquired a fabulous booty of gold, women and children, divided among soldiers according to Muslim war tradition: the Sultan claiming the royal fifth, the cavalry man getting twice as much as the foot soldier. Muslims destroyed some 6,000 Hindu temples in the course of their occupation of North India in the next several centuries.

In the Islamic world, Mahmud Gaznavi is held up as a glorious figure deserving much adulation. Pakistan has named one of its missiles Gaznavi, after the name of the ferocious Sultan. It is as if Germans chose to name their monuments after Goebbels, the English after General Dyer (the butcher of Jallianwala Bagh in 1919 in Punjab), and the Americans after Bull Connor (who opened fire hoses on peaceful civil rights marchers in Alabama in the 1960s).

The countries of the Near East (Turkey, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, etc.) and the Balkan region (Serbia, Bosnia, Albania, etc.) suffered a similar fate under Muslim conquest and occupation. Christianity and Judaism were the dominant religions in these countries before the onslaught of Islam. Bat Ye’or’s book, The Decline of Eastern Christianity Under Islam: from Jihad to Dhimmitude, 1996, provides a detailed account of the destruction and pillage that occurred in these countries under Islamic rule.

Memories of a grand Islamic empire are alive in the minds of militant Muslims. They believe that they were cheated of world dominion in the 17th century, when Islam faced defeat in India and Europe. The Hindu chieftain Shivaji defeated a Mogul army in 1660, and the Turkish army lost in Vienna in 1683, thus turning the tide against Islam.

THE ECONOMICS OF OIL

Islamic radicalism is two decades old and goes back to the period of the oil boom. The huge wealth derived from petroleum in the Arab Sheikhdoms has given rise to the belief that Muslims are favored by Allah. The extraordinary oil wealth, much like Muslim military victory, is taken as a sign of Allah’s happiness with Muslims and the justness of the Islamic cause. The reader may pursue this argument in Daniel Pipes’ In the Path of God: Islam and Political Power, 2001.

Petro-dollars are used to spread Islamic radicalism. The Saudi Government and its charities have funded several thousand religious schools or Madrassas, which turn out thousands of half-educated, Koran quoting bearded Muslim fanatics. These schools have been called factories for Jihad. Some 5,000 of these clerical schools exist within Pakistan alone. The oil rich Saudi Arabia preaches Wahabism, a puritanical branch of Islam. According to Fareed Zakaria of
Newsweek, the Saudi Kingdom has made the biggest Devil's bargain. It deflects attention from its misrule by funding religious extremism abroad.

The war in Afghanistan against the former Soviet Union has also led to extremism and militancy. A rag-tag army of the Holy Warriors defeated a super power, which promoted the belief that religious zeal and the way of Allah could defeat the mightiest of armies.

The following appeared in the Christian Science Monitor and illustrates the lengths to which militant Muslims will go to serve their cause.

By Robert Marquand | Staff writer October 18, 2001

Hailing from . . Pakistan, Hasan Ali dreams of a Muslim Utopia. The Islamic law student would like to create - through a holy war, if necessary - an Islamic state that spans the globe. All nations would be under the control of sharia (Islamic law), with the locus of authority in Saudi Arabia, "the center of Islam." And for the first act, he looks to Osama bin Laden, "our hero No. 1, our religious leader, our model, our general."

Hiding somewhere in the mountains of Afghanistan, the gray-bearded Ayman al-Zawahiri shares the same vision, and has been working side by side with Hasan's "hero No.1" for more than a decade. Mr. Zawahiri's life tracks the evolution of modern Islamic militancy - from his arrest at age 15 as a member of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood to his place today as the guiding intellect of Mr. bin Laden's Al Qaeda network.

Zam Amputan traveled across four time zones from the Philippines to attend a madrassah in Peshawar, Pakistan. He returned home, burning for a jihad. But now he has turned his back on Islamic militancy.

These future, present, and lapsed holy warriors have one thing in common: All are deeply etched by a steel-tipped Islamic fundamentalism that's now shaping international events - from the US-cratered roads of Kabul to clashes in Algeria's countryside to the carnage of Sept. 11 in New York . . .
In one sense, this strain of Islamic ideology has been around for at least the past two decades. It's been taught in the proliferating fundamentalist madrassahs in Pakistan. It has been fueled by petrodollars from Saudi Arabia, and preached in mosques from Egypt to Indonesia. And it continues to inspire militant groups such as Al Queda, the Taliban, Islamic Jihad, Abu Sayyaf, and many others. . .

One's credentials as a "true Muslim" are increasingly based on a willingness to use violence. In just the past year, the walls of buildings throughout northern Pakistan have become hand-scrawled billboards for "jihadi training," complete with phone numbers. And people are calling.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

Economic reform is often suggested as a solution to militancy. The poverty of Afghanistan is taken as a cause for its political instability. It is also said that the unemployed youth turn to religious extremism for comfort.

The poverty-radicalism thesis fails at both the level of the individual and at the level of the society. The 19 hijackers that attacked the World Trade Center were not poverty stricken. Osama bin-Laden is a millionaire. The militants are better educated and often originate from middle class backgrounds.

Poor societies are not the hotbed of militants. Bangladesh and Niger are not their breeding ground. Instead, the militants are most likely to be found in the oil rich Middle Eastern countries. Fifteen of the 19 hijackers who crashed into World Trade Center Towers were Saudi nationals.

Economic reform is good but it will not lead necessarily to moderation: building factories will not reduce the appeal of religion.

Fareed Zakaria, an Indian Moslem with the Newsweek calls radical Islam “an armed doctrine," a term that he borrowed from Edmund Burke. “Like other armed doctrines before it-- fascism for example--it can be discredited only by first being defeated.” When Hitler scored military victories, he was much admired. Many children in Europe and Latin America were named after him. When Nazism suffered defeat, Hitler was maligned and the children were given new names. Bin Laden understands the aura of victory: “When people see a weak horse and a strong horse, by nature they prefer the strong horse.” He claimed that he, bin Laden, was the stronger horse (Newsweek, December 24, 2001, 23-28).

America's war against militant Islam will embolden moderate Muslims to stand up and be counted. The quick eradication of the bin Laden network in Afghanistan has emboldened
President Musharraf of Pakistan to move boldly against militants in his own country. Musharraf would not have undertaken such a risky a venture prior to 9/11. In the changed environment, he feels encouraged. The moderate Islamic intelligentsia has begun to speak up against extremism. In a recent article the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto openly attacked militant Islamists in her country.

The clock has begun to turn. Much work remains to be done. It is not over till it is over.

A MESSAGE

Unitarian members in this congregation are tolerant in religion. They believe in pluralism; they believe that every religion should be respected. My background teaches me similar values of tolerance and respect for different religions.

I believe that tolerance is good, but it must not lead to appeasement or passivity. Tolerance must not mean that I am tolerant of someone else's intolerance.

The challenge of radical Islam is global. It affects all of us, including moderate Muslims. You cannot dismiss the conflict between Hindus and Muslims or between Jews and Muslims as ancient hatreds in distant lands. The 9/11 attack on WTC shows that radical Islam is here. The problem of radicalism and militancy will not go away until dealt with.

As a first step we scholars have the responsibility to open up radical Islam for critical examination. We must throw the light of reason on radical Islamic theology and its history of imperialism. All extremist ideologies have been scrutinized and exposed, including slavery, the Inquisition, apartheid, fascism, Nazism, colonialism, imperialism, and recently communism. Only radical Islam avoids exposition.

I do not foresee a war of civilizations as described by Huntington. I do see a challenge to civilization from religious extremism. I have focused in this article on the threat posed by militant Islam. Religious extremism exists in many countries including the United States. Extremism in all forms whether it originates in Christianity, Hinduism or Islam must be fought everywhere.

(Population estimates for different civilizations are provided in an Appendix).

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(Derived from Population Reference Bureau Data Sheet)

<table>
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<th>Civilization</th>
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Northern Africa 175

Total Islamic 1,085

Confucian 1,200

Japan 127

Sub-Saharan Africa 670

World 6,137

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