

Huntington's 'Clash of Civilization'

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is to examine issues related to the theory of clash of civilizations by Samuel P Huntington which is still interesting to debate. Various kinds of writings, both supporting and rejecting his theory, continue to rise. Moreover, if it is associated with the condition of relations between Islam and the West, it is immediately increasingly heating up. Will this Huntington's thesis be proven? Or is it the opposite? What definitely is interesting from this Huntington's Clash of Civilizations? What is our attitude and what should we do now? This theme will try to be elaborated in this short article as a preliminary search.

Keywords: *Clash of civilizations, political theory, Samuel P. Huntington, Islamic future*

1. INTRODUCTION

Discourse about the clash of civilizations voiced by Samuel P Huntington (hereinafter written by Huntington) which he wrote in Foreign Affairs in the summer of 1993 with the theme "Clash of Civilizations?" Has caused an uproar in the world of global politics. This discourse heated up after the launch of his book "The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order" in 1998.[1]

If we ponder over the matter for a moment about that discourse, what is actually done by Huntington is not new. If we look at history, actually, before Huntington's "*Clash of Civilizations*" thesis, there was a similar prediction which is no less interesting, even worthy of being a controversial view as Huntington's writing, for example Judith Miller's writing in a similar magazine (read: Foreign Affairs) with the theme "*The Challenge of Radical Islam*",[2] or even earlier seasoned-orientalist writings namely Bernard Lewis "*The Roots of Muslim Rage*",[3] "*The Enemies of God*"[4] or "*The Political Language of Islam*". There are Muslim writings appearing almost simultaneously with Huntington's thesis in which I also find interesting to debate, for example; Akhbar S. Ahmed's "*Islam and Post-Modernist*" published in 1992. Even more interesting, the idea of a clash between civilizations in the future had actually been expressed much earlier by Muslim intellectuals, such as Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Atta. At that time, he revealed that in between Western civilization and Islamic civilization, there will in future occur what he called a "*permanent confrontation*" (permanent confrontation), or eternal conflict, or *Clash of Civilizations* as the term that was raised by Huntington.

Talking about his idea of "*Clash of Civilizations*" by Huntington, there are many prominent Muslim scholars who disagree with Huntington's opinion such as Akbar S.

Ahmed. In commenting on Huntington, he stated that the clashes which occurred in world history showed more economic and political interests than cultural differences.[5] S. Ahmed argued by pointing to the phenomenon of the Gulf War I as an empirical fact of a political map that does not face in a diametrically opposite direction, the West vis a vis Islam but rather refers to the polarization of interests. In this case, Muslim countries such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Egypt are in the position of the same interests as America and its allies (West) so that for this reason it cannot be said that there has been a conflict between Islam and the West.[5]

Another weakness according to S. Ahmed is confusion in defining that civilization. In his book Huntington, he mentions seven or eight major civilizations which might confront each other in the future: The West, China / Confucius, Japan, Islam, Hinduism, Slav / Orthodoxy, Latin America, and Africa. Huntington mixes various things which are diverse, including location (West), teachings (Confucius), ethnicity (Slav), country (Japan), religion (Islam), and continent (Africa). From this pattern of division, according to S. Ahmed, Huntington seems inconsistent and without a definition of civilization that can be applied to test the thesis.[5]

Another intellectual who also criticized Huntington's thesis was Amartya Sen through his book "*Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*" Amartya Sen corrected the conceptual heresy that was built by Huntington. He stated that reducing complex civilizations to the oneness of identity was an illusion of civilization. Oneness of identity actually exacerbates the problem and gives nursery to various misunderstandings and acts of violence. Furthermore, he revealed that the veil of identity that enveloped and became an attribute of individuals or groups in modern society actually departs from the conceptualization of experience which is literally an illusion. Why? Because of conceptualization, there is a single naming intention on a human identity.[6], [7]

Another intellectual who also refuted his theory of Huntington came from Riaz Hasan through his book "Faithlines; Muslim Conception of Islam and Society".[8]

2. DISCUSSION

2.1. Samuel Huntington

Huntington has the full name Samuel Phillips Huntington who was born in New York City on April 18, 1927. He is a professor and chairman of the Political Science department at Harvard University and chairman of the Harvard Academy for International and Regional Studies at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs. In January 2000, Huntington placed his position as director at the Olin Institute. He wrote the book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* in 1998. Its contents predicted inter-cultural clashes. The book is a monumental work that has become controversial and sparked polemics in various parts of the world for more than three years.

His other book *Political Order in Changing Societies* was written in 1968. This book is often seen as a blueprint for a model of democratization that emphasizes stability. His latest book is *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* was published in May 2004. In this book, Huntington highlighted the America's identity as a settler not immigrant nation. The controversial famous thinker died at Martha's Vineyard on December 24, 2008.

2.2. The Appeal of Huntington's Clash of Civilizations

Since its emergence, the *Clash of Civilizations* thesis in *Foreign Affairs* magazine in 1993, Huntington's name became a world celebrity. The name Huntington has become a byword both in print and electronic media. Various books or short writings appeared between those who supported and criticized them. With only a few pages of writing capital, Huntington earned a lot of dollars and popularity. What exactly is interesting about this Huntington's thesis?

In my opinion, there are several things that make Huntington's thesis interesting;

Firstly, judging by the title, the article is very provocative. It is seen by the question mark (?). In this way, Huntington's writing has an allure which makes the reader want to read it thoroughly. Here in my opinion, one of the successes of Huntington's writings has a public allure to read it.

Besides, judging from the title, in my opinion, Huntington's thesis is actually still in the form of speculative predictions and not necessarily true. By putting the question mark symbol (?), Huntington's thesis is actually still in the form of hypotesa. This conjecture is proven by Huntington's own expression in the article. He

said "*this description does not support conflicts between civilizations as desirable but rather proposes empirical hypotheses about possible future patterns.*"[9]

Secondly, Huntington's figure is a famous and influential political scientist at Harvard University as a prestigious University and is the main reference for the policy of a superpower called America. Harvard University in the United States is an American political policy laboratory in which Huntington is involved and plays its role. If you see from this condition, the *Clash of Civilizations* thesis is truly not only Huntington's opinion, but actually in fact there is a perception that leads to the form of American political policy going forward.

Thirdly, the condition of post-war America by fulfilling information facilities made scientists competing to come up with ideas which would stimulate the world's future. At that time, the imagination of American educated people wandered far ahead. Various ideas and criticisms of previous ideas were echoed both verbally and in writing. At that moment, there was a great figure, Francis Fukuyama with his writing entitled "*The End of History*".[10] In that article, Fukuyama stated that the superiority of democracy and capitalism had completely defeated communism as a political and economic system. this condition was interpreted by him as a sign of the cessation of the path of history. With these conditions, he stated that the threat of the Cold War volume II would not occur.[11] The emergence of Fukuyama's thesis turned out to get a rebuttal from Huntington. In this case, Huntington argues differently from Fukuyama. According to him (Huntington), on the contrary in the future America (the West) will experience more fierce warfare than with the Sofyet Union, and the threat comes from Islam and Confucius.

For Huntington, militant Islam is a real threat to the West through terrorists and rouge states who are trying to develop nuclear weapons, as well as other means. "In his writings entitled "The Age of Muslim Wars", Huntington noted: "The possibility of a 'clash of civilizations' is now present." [12] He also emphasized, "Today's global politics are a time of war against Muslims." Huntington's writing in Newsweek reaffirms his old thesis (*Clash of Civilizations*). he stressed that the conflict between Islam and Christians - both Orthodox Christians and Western Christians - are real conflicts whereas the conflict between Capitalists and Marxists is only a brief and shallow conflict.[1]

At least, for these three reasons, in my opinion, the Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* thesis receives an extraordinary response throughout the world, including in Indonesia.

2.3. Realistic and Pessimistic Predictions

In his book *The Clash of Civilization*, Huntington states that the fundamental source of conflict in the new world is basically no longer ideological or economic, but cultural. Culture will choose humans and become the dominant source of conflict. The nation state will continue to be the

most powerful actor in the world political arena, but the most principle global political conflict will occur between nations and groups because of differences in their civilizations. The clash between civilizations will dominate global politics. The dividing lines between civilizations will become lines of contention in the future. Conflict between civilizations will be the last phase of the evolution of conflict in the modern world.[11]

If we remember and consider the condition of the world a few years after Huntington's thesis, on the contrary, the clash is even greater in the internal civilization. For example; how do the elites of Muslim countries who find it easier to cooperate with countries in the West compared to Arab countries, how about the American countries which are still keen to fight for democratic values, pluralism but on the contrary is still close "with allies of Saudi Arabia who actually reject the idea of democracy.[13]

Another interesting thing from Huntington is his belief that the clash between civilizations in the future will literally occur. He outlines a number of reasons which do look realistic. According to him, there are several reasons for the clash of civilizations;

Firstly, the difference between civilizations is not only real, but also fundamental. Over the centuries, differences between civilizations have caused the most violent and longest conflicts. A civilization is the highest grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity which accepted by people in order to distinguish them from other species. The reason which outlined by Huntington seems to make sense because right now the world is being colored by such conditions.[14], [15]

Secondly, the world is presently narrowing. From this condition, interactions between people of different civilizations will increase. With this increased interaction, it will sharpen the awareness and sense of differences in civilizations between people or societies of different civilizations but also sharpen awareness of the similarities contained in these civilizations. To strengthen his argument, he presents the historical reality of the problem of immigration from the Muslim Algeria to France which is opposed by the French people. Conversely, the Tresence of Polish Catholic Immigrants does not invite too high a negative reaction.

This argument certainly makes sense with reason because usually, differences in the two cultures can cause conflict. However, the conflict will be muted if the presence of foreign people with different cultures is at a high level (many) so that it influences national economic politics. If conditions were like that, conflicts might not occur.

Thirdly, the process of economic modernization and world social change makes people or communities deprived of their deep-rooted local identities, as well as weakening the nation-state as the source of their identity. In this case, religion emerged as a source of identity and guidance, often in the form of a "fundamentalism" movement.[11]

Fourthly, the growing awareness of civilization is possible because of the dual role of the West. On one hand, the West is at the peak of strength. on the other hand, this may be due to the Western position, the return to the ongoing

phenomenon of origin among non-Western civilizations. This argument has a point. The existence of Western domination and the pressure it exerted on other countries caused various anti Western reactions. This is seen in three problems which are now beginning to be seen; a). the human rights issues. B). the concept of democracy. C). about the environment. These three problems have received strong reactions from Islamic countries.

Fifthly, the characteristics and cultural differences can not be unified so that it is less able to compromise than political and economic characteristics and differences.[11] Huntington's argument is based on the fact that a person is half American and half Arab and can be a dual nation or is it possible for someone to be a Christian or half Muslim.

Sixthly, the existence of economic regionalism is increasing.[11] According to him, a successful economic regionalism will strengthen the awareness of civilization, and on the other hand, economic regionalism can only succeed if it is rooted in the same culture.

From the six arguments built by Huntington, the sixth reason is the weakest. This reasoning is contrary to reality on the ground. Civilization awareness is not the main *raison d'etre* of the formation of various economic regionalisms. Regionalism cooperation, both in economy and politics, is created to bind member countries so that it would be difficult for them to wage war with each other. With cultural similarity, it will facilitate regional forms of cooperation.

2.4. Clash of Civilizations, a Conflict of Interest

Huntington sees Islam and the West as two civilizations which clash with each other in the future. There are many people then question: *the clash of civilization or the clash of interest?* This question is reasonable given the research conducted by Fawaz A. Gerges who showed a map of the polarization of intellectuals in America. According to Fawaz, American intellectual groups are actually divided into two groups: Confrontationists and accomodationists. The first group continually perceives Islam with negative imagery. In other words, they consistently consider Islam as the black side of the world. Islam has always been positioned as a threat to democracy and the birth of a peaceful world order. Exponent belonging to this group for example is Almos Perlmutter, Samuel Huntington, Gilles Kepel, and Bernard Lewis.[16]

Meanwhile, accommodation groups reject Islamist descriptions which constantly portray Islam as anti-democratic. They differentiate between the actions of Islamist political position groups and only a small minority of extreme minorities. Among this group, there are names of John L. Esposito and Leon T. Hadar. For them, in the past as well as in the present, the real threat of Islam is none other than the Western myth which is repeatedly So they borrow the term former Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Mahathir Muhammad, afraid of his own shadow.[16]

In my opinion, the Huntington's thesis is veritably part of a recommendation for the United States government to create a new world map on planet Earth. Huntington in this case wants to remind the US government to be aware of new threats after the cold war and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Authentic evidence of the "factor of interest" accompanying Western (American) actions in political and military actions that led to a clash between the West and several Islamic countries is a phenomenon of the Gulf War II in Iraq. Under the pretext of combating terrorism by subverting Saddam Hussein's power, which is considered to protect terrorists, ultimately is the control of oil resources which are said to be almost equivalent to those of Saudi Arabia. More than that, with the collapse of Saddam's government in Iraq, it will further strengthen US hegemony as the only superpower on earth that has the right to do anything to carry out its global interests.

This opinion was agreed by prominent Muslim intellectuals from Morocco, Muhammad Abed al-Jabiri. According to al-Jabiri, throughout history, relations between civilizations are not confrontational, but interpenetration. In fact, confrontations and conflicts are more frequent and destructive than confrontations between countries with different civilizations. The proof, two world wars occurred in Western civilization, caused by conflicts of interest (conflicts of interests).[17]

2.5. Attitude against Clash of Civilizations

In this era of globalization, the process of influencing one another is not negotiable. The role of the media as an "infectious" tool has penetrated those barriers. consequently, an ideology or culture can enter other ideologies and cultures. With this condition, shaking can occur if the globalization virus transmission is not in accordance with its cultural and social characteristics. If this continues to crystallize, the clash of civilizations as predicted by Huntington might happen in the future.

Such conditions turn out to continue. This is the idea of dialogue between civilizations began to be conceived as the antithesis of the clash of civilizations Huntington. Various events were held related to the importance of dialogue between civilizations. Among those who gassed are; Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan. In his paper, he proposed the theme "*Dialogue of Civilizations*" rather than "*Clash of Civilizations*".[18] This alternative idea was also developed by other Muslim world leaders, such as Anwar Ibrahim and B.J. Habibie. However, the optimistic hopes of world leaders in knitting the kinship had to fail due to an impromptu event that struck the WTC and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001.

The importance of dialogue as a solution due to friction between Islam and the West must still be echoed because the completion of this model is considered to be at least at risk. This dialogue assumes that the parties to the conflict (West and non-West - Islam-) are in a parallel position to want to understand each other. Western countries must be willing to put an end to imperialist attitudes in all its

forms, including post-colonialism projects, and begin to establish equal and friendly relations. Cooperation and participation will be meaningful if it is based on a balance of interests and free from hegemony.

After the dialogues turned out to not be able to succeed optimally, another way that non-Western (developing or Muslim) countries should not avoid would be to fight the hegemony with the potential of existing power. The most fundamental way of fighting hegemony is to be critical of various knowledge developed by and for the benefit of the West.

3. CONCLUSION

From the explanation above, several important conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, the basis of the clash between Islam and the West is economic and political interests (capitalization and liberalization). Secondly, the Western domination of the current non-Western world which includes the Islamic world is in the context of securing Western global economic and political interests. Thirdly, domination is carried out by the West in the most subtle ways to the most violent, even bloody way (physical war). The subtle way of the West is constructed through a regime of knowledge which is constantly being injected into the intellectual world of Islam so that other knowledge may not develop. Fourthly, the way to counter Western hegemony is to be critical of the West, including in this case being critical of various knowledge developed by and for the benefit of the West.

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