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The Clash of Civilizations Thesis: From the Securitization of the Realm of Ideas to the Manufacturing of Terrorism

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Abstract: This study attempts to dissect Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" thesis, which he presented as an attempt to interpret the new dynamics of international relations in the post-Cold War era. This theory assumes that future conflicts will emerge between different civilizations based on their cultural and religious differences, rather than political and economic ones. This vision summoned the philosophy of conflict as a central actor and ignored the universal, immutable reality of interaction, integration, harmony, and dialectical engagement among cultures and civilizations. This, in turn, led to the emergence of the phenomenon of the securitization of the realm of ideas and beliefs, which created an environment conducive to violence and counter-violence, and encouraged individuals and groups to resort to violence as a means of expressing resistance to cultural and political hegemony. It also fostered a tendency toward conflict, domination, and civilizational egocentrism, which directly contributed to the generation and manufacturing of terrorism in its various political, religious, and ideological contexts, and to its transition from the local to the global.
Keywords: clash, civilizations, terrorism, securitization of ideas, securitization of civilizations

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Introduction

The concept of the "Clash of Civilizations" in Western thought is closely tied to a set of propositions and references that constitute the foundations of the Western epistemological system. This notion of conflict has also been contextually linked to the philosophy and outcomes of colonialism, wherein Western powers, throughout their long history, have pursued expansion and domination at the expense of the Other. The epistemological connection to this system lies in its nature as a worldview that incites and summons conflict across various epistemic and philosophical fields through its multiple models for confronting the "Other." As a result, the notion of conflict, with all its connotations, has become a central idea in Western discourse, forming an integral part of the intellectual, cultural, economic, political, and civilizational vision underpinning major projects emanating from it—whether through Orientalist institutions, academic academies, and scientific societies, or through philosophical references and academic figures who have engaged in this vision.

It should be noted here that the idea of conflict in Western thought is neither a recent discovery nor an innovation attributable to Huntington. Its foundations were laid in deeply rooted historical periods, beginning with the Greek Sophists and extending through the Renaissance and the era of modernity. Nevertheless, it has remained a subtle yet central thread linking philosophies of nature, humanity, politics, history, and economics long before the time of Fukuyama and Huntington. What is particularly noteworthy is that the latter—Huntington—was the first to employ the concept of "civilization" in its geographical-historical-religious sense as a unit of analysis for future global conflict. He succeeded in constitutionalizing this idea within the collective consciousness, and even within the epistemological, intellectual, and political imaginary of the West in an official manner. In this regard, Huntington's theory stands as one of the most prominent attempts in modern and contemporary history to impose a rewriting of the history of ideas—in other words, a "new coercive historicization" of ideas, or at the very least, a restructuring, reprogramming, and recharging of those ideas that belong to the family and lexicon of conflict: war, confrontation, clash, alliance, existential threat, civilizational hegemony the self versus the other—so as to serve the logic of securitization and the production of terrorism.

This study examines the deconstruction of the philosophical, historical, and epistemological foundations of the idea of conflict, and its transformations—from an abstract notion to a tool of domination; from the manufacture of the enemy to the manufacture of terrorism; from security to securitization; and ultimately to civilizational securitization. At the heart of this process rises the "Exo-Cogito" or the "Cogito of Civilizational Exclusion," which expresses a compulsion to classify the Other as a threat based on civilizational identity. It constitutes a launching point through which the civilizational Self delineates its boundaries: an "I–Civilization"

that can only be completed through the negation of difference.

The study seeks to fill a critical gap through a philosophical and epistemological methodology, demonstrating how the history of ideas has been forcibly rewritten, and how this "Cogito" laid the symbolic groundwork for the conceptual and political coinage of "terrorism." It explores how security was transformed into the securitization of the world of ideas—where entire civilizations were classified as existential threats—rendering conflict the global language of dialogue, and terrorism a shared product enacted by states, institutions, groups, military bases, universities, and research centers alike.

This study also addresses structural questions that touch upon the depths of the phenomenon of terrorism—particularly when it is a product of theoretical discourse originating from the highest platforms of global theorization, such as universities and research centers, and formulated by thinkers whose pens are driven by the foreign policies of states, like Huntington.

In this context, we may ask: How did the theory of the "Clash of Civilizations" contribute to consolidating a Western epistemological model that frames the Other as a permanent civilizational threat? To what extent does this thesis and its approach help create an intellectual climate that institutionalizes violence as a condition for reproducing the Western Self? Does the theory of the "Clash of Civilizations" represent a transitional phase from the securitization of geography to the securitization of ideas and identities? What are the epistemological roots that granted the idea of the "Clash of Civilizations" a wide-ranging theoretical, practical, and political legitimacy—so much so that broad intellectual sectors in the West have come to align with it?

This is what we seek to investigate in this study, relying on the propositions of the theory, its discursive tools, and its epistemological extensions within the Western mind, as well as its fragmentations in political practice and its manifestations in various forms of terrorism—whether in the form of what the American philosopher Noam Chomsky calls "retail terrorism," carried out by individuals or groups (Chomsky 1990, 13), or in the form of "wholesale terrorism," perpetrated by states that seek to drag entire civilizations into practicing it under the pretext of civilization itself—precisely as the Zionist entity does in Palestine.

Theoretical and Epistemological Foundations of the "Clash of Civilizations" Thesis

Historical study reveals that Western civilization has been uniquely characterized by its pursuit of the annihilation and eradication of other civilizations, making the notion of conflict a permanent axis in its relationship with the peoples of the world and the universe. This idea evolved through three successive civilizational phases, each of which granted it a different dimension of legitimacy: it began with the Greek

civilization, which conferred upon it an intellectual dimension; then came the Roman civilization, which bestowed political legitimacy for eliminating the Other; and finally, Western Christianity, which granted it a moral dimension through the adoption of the "Just War Theory"—a concept that later influenced modern Western thought and laid the groundwork for the idea of extermination (ʿAbd al-Munʿim 2007, 4).

This entrenchment and the gradual development of the idea of conflict within the Western intellectual and behavioural system can be traced through three interrelated levels: the philosophical level, the historical level, and the epistemological-structural level.

Philosophical Foundations of the "Clash of Civilizations" Theory

It is not surprising to assert that Western philosophical thought—in many of its major schools and central currents—regards conflict and confrontation as essential components for understanding the human being, as well as the movement of history and society. On this basis, it theorizes and provides foundational justifications for this idea across much of its philosophical, intellectual, and political literature.This dimension has been present since the earliest stages of Greek philosophy, where Heraclitus (540–480 BCE) considered conflict and war to be universal laws governing the cosmos in pursuit of a better society (Nādi 2024, 153).

The ideas of Heraclitus constituted one of the principal cornerstones of the concept of conflict in Western thought. For this reason, Heraclitean philosophy is, in one way or another, intrinsically linked to the Western philosophical legacy on themes related to change, contradiction, and the conflict of opposites (Philippe 1969, 133). Indeed, many thinkers and scholars who have traced the history of ideas concerning conflict, dialectics, and confrontation—including the "Clash of Civilizations" as a political and intellectual product of this lineage—affirm the clear influence of Heraclitus's theorization. His impact was not confined to a particular school or philosophical current; rather, it extended across all traditions, whether materialist or idealist, atheistic or religious (al-Nashshār 1998, 123).

This influence directly shaped the works of major philosophers and theorists throughout the course of Western civilization and its intellectual productions. Generation after generation, Western philosophers continued to reproduce and consolidate this idea to the extent that it became impervious to exclusion from any comprehensive philosophical or political theorization. Within this general framework, the concept of conflict in Western thought takes on various forms. For example, in the thought of Thomas Hobbes and political realism theorists, conflict is understood as natural. In his seminal work *Leviathan*, Hobbes presents

conflict as an inherent condition of human nature and makes it the central axis for understanding the origins of authority and political society, asserting that human beings are by nature aggressive—thus leading to a state of "war of all against all" (Hobbes 1986, 88).

Hegel deepened the concept of conflict by giving it a dialectical dimension in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where he argues that consciousness is realized only through the recognition of the Other—recognition that can occur only through a struggle that results in a master–slave relationship, thereby driving the development of consciousness, freedom, and selfhood (Hegel 2006, 270). He affirms that prolonged peace leads to civilizational stagnation, within the dialectic of stability and change (Marcuse 1970, 79).Nietzsche adopted this trajectory in his genealogical analyses, adding a more acute existential dimension. He viewed war as a tool for the re-evaluation of values and the re-establishment of meaning, stating: "Love peace as a means for renewing wars; the best peace is the shortest one" (Nāzlī Ismāʿīl 2004, 79).

The idea of conflict reached its peak in Marxist thought, where Marxism represented the culmination of social Darwinism by presenting a social theory that emphasized the dialectic of material productive forces, while preserving the essence of conflict associated with domination and control rather than mere survival or progress (Mona Abul-Fadl 1996, 22). Undoubtedly, Huntington's theory of the clash of civilizations was influenced by this logic of conflict, shifting the center of conflict from economics to culture and identity, thus laying the groundwork for a new era of theoretically framed violence. Within this chronological context of the history of the idea of conflict, Arnold Toynbee is considered among the first to point to the notion of a clash of civilizations, as he predicted that historians in the coming millennia would be preoccupied with the clash between Western civilization and other societies (Nasser Rahi 2017, 25).

Western approaches reinforcing the idea of conflict continued to proliferate—not as a circumstantial backdrop, but as a structural foundation for understanding the world. By the late twentieth century, even as global discourse was promoting the idea of a "Dialogue of Civilizations," two pivotal theses emerged: Fukuyama's *The End of History*, which proclaimed the triumph of Western liberalism, and Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*, which paved the way for a new global confrontation—particularly with the so-called "Islamic threat." This coincided with the rise of "securitization theory," which provided an epistemological cover for legitimizing violence and intervention under the pretext of national security. In this way, the conflict-oriented model became deeply embedded in the structure of Western thought, steering both theory and philosophy toward a horizon saturated with suspicion and confrontation with the Other.

A chronological review of wars and conflicts reveals that the most brutal wars were either waged within the Western sphere or led by Western powers beyond their own territories. The Greek civilization—which is considered the origin of European civilization and dates back nearly 3,000 years—was founded upon the idea of conflict. As for the Roman Empire, it is regarded as the first to initiate preemptive wars and expansionist campaigns at the expense of other peoples. It is thus considered the first colonial state in ancient history (ʿAbd al-Munʿim 2007, 11).

The Romans were also the first to institutionalize the exclusion and eradication of others, as they did not recognize the right of others to disagree with them. When the Roman Empire was in a phase of ascendancy, Jesus the Messiah (peace be upon him) appeared. Upon his emergence, he was treated as the "Other." The Romans implemented a policy of racial discrimination against the followers of Christ and subjected them to torture simply because they belonged to the "Other" (ʿĀrif 2007, 192).

The Crusades (1095–1274 CE), which occurred during the medieval period, emerged as a renewed version of identity assertion and the exercise of power—practices previously enacted by the Romans and Byzantines (Munā Abū al-Faḍl 1996, 46). Chroniclers of the time recorded, without the slightest hesitation, the massacres that marked the Crusaders' victory upon seizing Jerusalem. Subsequently, the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453) erupted between England and France, representing a prolonged conflict among European core powers over dominance and influence. This was followed by the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), which left behind terrifying visual depictions—such as the carvings of Jacques Callot—that captured its horrors. Meanwhile, countless theologians were engaged in justifying the war in the name of the Gospel (Bonyon 2000, 15).

This state of conflict, subjugation, hegemony, and the philosophy of power persisted with the rise of Western colonial (colonial) agendas aimed at subduing the Islamic world. Europe colonized vast swathes of the Muslim world's geography, and the First and Second World Wars resulted in over 80 million deaths—the highest toll in the history of warfare. With the occupation of Palestine by Zionist militias and the establishment of a settler-colonial entity at the expense of centuries of Palestinian geography and history, the Middle East entered yet another phase of conflict—one whose repercussions are still unfolding today. These are most vividly manifested in the horrific massacres committed by the Israeli occupation in Gaza, which it frames as a civilizational war waged on behalf of Western civilization.

The outcomes of this aggressive, conflict-driven behavior inherent in Western civilization have heightened the sense of existential threat facing humanity. There is little doubt that the West, through such behavior, has managed to accumulate vast territories of hostility—hostility it could have avoided—from enmity toward the self

to enmity toward the Other. In this context, Ervin Laszlo—one of the prominent thinkers of our time, known as the genius of systems thinking—utters a grim yet piercingly ironic remark. He states: "If every species on Earth were given one vote, and a global referendum were held on whether Western civilization should be allowed to continue existing, I believe all species—perhaps with the exception of cockroaches and rats—would vote against us. The result of such a referendum would be 100% of the votes against Western civilization. That is not a good outcome for planet Earth. It must perish" (Aḥmad 2026, 6).

Epistemological Foundations of the "Clash of Civilizations" Theory

While the philosophical level has revealed the depth of the idea of conflict and its extensions within the Western philosophical system—and how it has shaped Western civilization's political behavior toward the Other—the epistemological dimension allows us to deconstruct the deeper cognitive structure of Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* theory. This section aims to examine the underlying epistemic framework and knowledge system that gave rise to the worldview—or *Weltanschauung*—embedded in the Western mind, as well as the role of Orientalism in establishing the *Clash of Civilizations* thesis and in promoting violence and confrontation.

The Nature of the Western Epistemological System Based on Sharp Dualisms

What most characterizes the Western epistemological model—upon which Huntington drew his philosophy—is that it is founded on sharp dichotomies. The "Other," in most Western philosophies, is associated with suffering; the mere existence of the Other represents a burden, an anxiety, and a source of pain, as Sartre explicitly states (Ali Gomaa 2005, 50). This is in stark contrast to the philosophy of the Islamic epistemological model, which, for the first time in the history of religious laws, nations, states, and civilizations, affirmed from the outset that the "Other" is a part of the "Self" (Amara 2003, 50). Therefore, one can clearly observe the manifestations and outcomes of this vision in both the Islamic and Western epistemological systems by examining the outputs of their actions throughout the histories of their civilizations.

Moreover, the Western environment, by its very nature, provides fertile ground for the development of an epistemological system rooted in ongoing hostility toward the Other. As Mālik Bennabi notes, the European individual carries a persistent sense of pride instilled from the maternal atmosphere in which he is raised and where his worldview and conception of humanity are formed. He firmly believes, in particular, that history and civilization begin in Athens, pass through Rome, then vanish from existence for a thousand years, only to reappear in Paris during the Renaissance. For this individual—charged with pride—nothing of significance exists before

Athens, and between Aristotle and Descartes lies only an empty void. It is precisely this peculiar outlook held by Westerners that distorts, from the very outset, their philosophy—and, consequently, their global political posture (Bin Nabī 1981, 161).

Huntington developed his thesis by drawing upon the rigid and exclusionary propositions of the Western epistemological system toward the Other. He exploited a wide range of resources from the field of philosophical studies to formulate his "Clash of Civilizations" theory and employed them ideologically. He turned to the philosophy of science to borrow the concept of the *paradigm* in support of his thesis, and likewise drew on the philosophy of history to enable him to offer a civilizational interpretation of contemporary global politics (Nāṣir Rāhī 2017, 10).From this perspective, Huntington's approach can be read as an attempt to impose a cognitive model for analysis and synthesis, aimed at constructing a totalizing and hegemonic worldview directed toward conflict—one that seeks to resolve global confrontation epistemologically in favor of Western civilization. This stands in contrast to earlier discourses centered on dialogue among civilizations, coexistence, and the notion of *mutual contestation* (tadāfuʿ) rather than conflict and clash.

The collective imagination in the West—shaped by an epistemological system and a comprehensive cosmological worldview—continues to be governed by notions of conflict and domination. Even when the West expresses a desire for civilizational dialogue or alliance, its discourse is, for the most part, directed toward media consumption, as it lacks an authentic grounding in this innate language. At times it attempts to fabricate it, and at others to boast about it, yet it is quickly overpowered by its ingrained ethos of haste, power, dominance, and superiority. Thus, the meanings and vocabulary of dialogue, with all their connotations and implications, remain in Western civilization as no more than a parenthetical clause within its broader civilizational text—a clause that, by its nature, can be omitted or deleted. And indeed, it has been omitted for centuries—and continues to be.

Orientalist Foundations of the "Clash of Civilizations" Thesis

At the epistemological level, Orientalism stands as one of the most prominent intellectual incubators that contributed to the consolidation of the idea of civilizational conflict. It is, in fact, regarded as a strategic sponsor of this worldview in its modern trajectories. Classical Orientalism served as a foundational base for the discourse of the "Clash of Civilizations," to the extent that some critics consider Huntington's version to be merely a revised extension of that project in the post–Cold War context. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge the existence of certain Orientalist currents that were fair in their treatment of Islamic civilization and advocated for dialogue and mutual understanding rather than confrontation. This calls for a critical distinction between Orientalism as a mechanism of domination and those scholarly

efforts that were marked by fairness and objectivity.

There is a remarkable phenomenon in the relationship between Orientalism and colonialism: Orientalist theorization served as the "scientific manual for colonialism," and military occupation of the Islamic world and Orientalist discourse were two inseparable phenomena. The connection between Orientalism and colonialism is organic— "Wherever there is colonialism, there is Orientalism; and as colonial expansion increases, so does Orientalist production. The rule that never fails is this: colonialism is always accompanied by Orientalism, and colonial expansion is always accompanied by the expansion of Orientalism" (Ghurāb 1990, 8).

Bernard Lewis observes that since its inception, Orientalism has carried two intertwined dimensions: a cognitive one driven by curiosity and a desire to learn from a superior Islamic civilization, and a polemical, confrontational one that reflects the rivalry between Islam and Western Christianity. By the end of the Middle Ages, European consciousness had crystallized around the idea that converting Muslims to Christianity was an impossible task. Consequently, Islam came to be viewed not as a theological threat, but as a worldly power that posed a political danger to Christendom. This shift led the West to move from intellectual refutation to military confrontation (Arkoun 2001, 215).

In the new Huntingtonian Orientalism, "the East" was replaced by "Islam" as the symbolic threat. The world was culturally partitioned, placing the Middle East at the lowest and most dangerous tier—thus warranting its subjugation. Islam was assigned the identity of "fundamentalism" and was equated with terrorism, resulting in the construction of a fictitious enemy that served to reinforce the West's own identity. Accordingly, most Orientalist studies are characterized by hostility toward Islam or fear of it, as clearly manifested in Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* theory, which reduced the relationship between the West and Islam to one of conflict alone (al-Diyūb 2018, 85).

Huntington thus laid the foundation for a form of "geopolitical Orientalism" that moves beyond mere description to advocating strategic action against Islam. His thesis constitutes a continuation of traditional Orientalism, yet with the specific aim of redrawing the map of the world according to the logic of Western dominance. As Edward Said aptly puts it: "To say simply that Orientalism was a facet of imperialism and colonialism is not a controversial statement—but it does require analytical and historical deconstruction" (Said 1984, 40).

Dynamics of Conflict and Terrorism in the "Clash of Civilizations" Thesis

In Huntington's framework, one can clearly observe the prominent presence of binary oppositions—polarizing dualities that incite confrontation and create a fertile climate for its proliferation. These binaries contribute to cultivating a global

atmosphere predisposed to war and the production of terrorism. They typically reduce discourse to rigid and extreme polarities based on absolute values such as "good/evil" or "civilization/barbarism." The result is a reductive oversimplification of history, thought, and civilization. From the perspective of this study, such binaries appear as a persistent source of tension and conflict. They embed difference within narrow security and cultural frames, eliminate nuance and flexibility, and justify exclusionary, confrontational, and hateful policies. They transform every form of civilizational or intellectual plurality into an existential threat that must be confronted.

For this reason, Huntington's propositions have faced sharp criticism from numerous thinkers in the West and beyond, due to their reductive simplifications, manipulative use of cultural boundaries, and their erasure of the positive meanings within the very terms they deploy. His discourse reconfigures these terms into a violent, conflict-oriented narrative, repurposing them into tools of confrontation.

Moreover, the concept of "civilization," with its complex cultural components, is far too intricate to be captured by Huntington's reductive and simplistic reasoning. The term carries multiple layers of meaning and is open to various interpretations. For this reason, historians typically approach it with a high degree of methodological caution when defining or employing it. What is striking, however, is Huntington's confident and repeated use of the term throughout his thesis—without showing any hesitation or conceptual restraint (al-Diyūb 2018, 85).

What this section of the study will highlight is that the accumulation of binary discourse within theories addressing civilizational complexities has produced a conceptual framework heavily laden with a vocabulary of conflict. This vocabulary has facilitated the normalization and globalization of violence and terrorism—spreading it into discursive arenas that had previously advocated for dialogue. What was once local and reactive has been exported globally, escalating levels of violence and confrontation—whether formal or informal, by states or non-state actors—in unprecedented ways.

The Binary of Identity and Conflict: Rooting Violence

Huntington's theory rests on the assumption that post–Cold War conflicts will no longer be primarily ideological or economic, but rather cultural. He argues that the principal divisions among humankind will be civilizational, and that global conflicts will occur between nations belonging to different civilizations. This means that identity-based distinctions are transformed into civilizational frontlines, where conflict is internalized as a mechanism for self-preservation against the Other. In this framework, belonging becomes a justification for mobilization against difference, and difference itself turns into a source of sustained hostility. To reinforce his thesis, Huntington likens this identity-based conflict to a primitive tribal struggle, declaring:

"Civilizations are the human tribes, and the clash of civilizations is a tribal conflict on a global scale" (Huntington 1999, 36). This is a reductive and problematic analogy—unworthy of a scholar considered among America's leading political scientists.

In theorizing the mechanisms that escalate confrontation, Huntington supports the premise that strengthening internal identity bonds can intensify conflict. To achieve this, a common enemy must be constructed to preserve the internal cohesion of Western civilization and to reinforce its identity and structural integrity. Pierre Conesa describes this dynamic in his analysis of the psychology of violence, explaining that the reconstruction of group unity—or national identity—often requires the symbolic offering of a sacrificial enemy. The adversarial group becomes the entity offered up to be sacrificed. The mere act of enemy construction can generate internal cohesion, regardless of the actual level of threat (Conesa 2015, 35).

The possibility of coexistence, and the opportunities for mutual understanding, dialogue, and convergence within the sphere of shared humanity and a unifying human identity, are vast—if only collective will and determination were united. The human common ground can reveal a universal cultural and civilizational identity capable of curbing the excesses and extremism of the derivative sub-identities. It is an identity that precedes all others. If the worldview were shaped by this integrative logic, the human being would no longer find himself "distant in history and geography," and other people in the world would no longer appear as an alien creation unknown or unrelated to him. Rather, he would see himself as part of this world, speaking of other parts and being spoken of by them—seeing and being seen—reacting to what happens in any part of the world (Ḥasan Malkāwī 2006, 10).

This is what has led some scholars to distinguish between *identity* and *identity discourse*. While the former is—at the very least—a symbolic reality lived by societies and individuals, the latter is an ideological discourse shaped by the strategies and shifts of political action. Identity, as a form of culture, constitutes the fabric of grassroots social engagement. In this sense, it differs from *particularism*, which is purely an ideological discourse directed toward the Other with the aim of affirming the Self and rejecting any identification with the Other or with what the Other represents. It is a form of resistance politics that takes on a cultural guise (Ziyāda 2005, 184).

The West–Islam Binary and the Construction of the Enemy

It is neither surprising nor unusual within the Western cultural and epistemological sphere to find a narrative centered on a lurking enemy that threatens Western civilization and society. This narrative is deeply rooted in the collective imagination and the communal psyche since the times of the Greeks and Romans. Yet, why is the construction of the enemy an existential necessity in the Western epistemic and political imaginary—despite the fact that it contributes to the proliferation of violence

and terrorism? After all, one cannot have an enemy defined by enmity who is not, in one way or another, classified within the sphere of terrorism.

Huntington answers this question: "After the fall of the Soviet Union, the West is in urgent need of a new enemy to unite its states and peoples. War will not cease, even if weapons fall silent and treaties are signed, for a civilizational war is coming—one that will continue between the Western camp led by America and other parties, the Islamic civilization being the most likely candidate for confrontation" (al-Ṭawīl 2014, 154). Thus, uncovering the origins and foundations of Huntington's theory and discourse reveals a theory already programmed for conflict—meaning, the programming of the Other for confrontation—through the construction of a presumed enemy, in order to remain at the forefront of global affairs and to sustain the rationale for confrontation at the same intensity as during the Cold War.

In his book *Manufacturing the Enemy: How to Kill with a Clear Conscience*, Pierre Conesa argues that the disappearance of a fixed enemy—represented by the Soviet Union during the Cold War—left a tremendous strategic vacuum within the Western security mindset. This vacuum prompted the West to attempt the construction of substitute adversaries through the designation of "rogue states" or the launching of the "War on Terror". Yet, even after nearly thirty years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, Europe and the United States continue to mobilize their resources in search of a suitable institutionalized enemy—without finding a replacement that matches the structured hostility once provided by the former Soviet Union. In this context, we are reminded of the ironic warning issued by Aleksandr Arbatov, diplomatic advisor to Mikhail Gorbachev: "We will do you the worst of services—we will deprive you of your enemy." That remark continues to resonate in the West's persistent confusion in its quest for a fitting adversary (Conesa 2015, 14).

And if Islam was nominated to take center stage as the primary enemy after the expiration of the traditional adversary in the Cold War, this was not because the West is ignorant of the true nature of Islam as a religion of tolerance and coexistence. On the contrary, the West has studied Islam and explored its depths since the long era of Orientalism. It knows well that Islam is closer to dialogue than to confrontation, and to mutual understanding rather than hostility. This means that the Western *Other* is not incapable of understanding the Arab and Muslim *Other* as it truly is, but rather refuses to present it in its true form. In his book *Islam and the West: Self and Other*, Professor al-Jābrī cites a statement by the Western writer Philippe Sénac, which suggests that the problem lies in the fact that, for the West, Islam is more a subject for constructing imagination than for objective knowledge (Khuḍayr 2019, 226).

As for Huntington's second claim—that the internal regions of the Islamic world are inherently violent—it would suffice for the West to withdraw its support for authoritarian regimes in the Arab and Islamic worlds. Such a shift would usher in security and stability, allowing people to freely choose their own leaders—leaders capable of guiding them toward development, sovereignty, and global leadership.

Undoubtedly, extremism would dissipate once the protective shield over oppressive governments is lifted, and once just causes are resolved responsibly—chief among them the Palestinian cause—by returning rights to their rightful owners, rather than contributing to the complexities of the Zionist settler-colonial project, which only exacerbates the pace of comprehensive confrontation.

Aimé Césaire affirms this meaning in his vivid depiction of the destruction wrought by Western state terrorism on the structural fabric of colonized nations. He writes: "I am speaking of societies emptied of their essence, of cultures assassinated, mutilated, and reconstructed; of institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions distorted, and extraordinary potentials resurrected in unnatural ways. I am speaking of millions of people into whose souls the seeds of fear, weakness, trembling terror, cycles of humiliation and despair, and the baseness of servitude have been skillfully implanted" (Césaire 1994, 20).

Self and Other: The Anthropology of the Enemy in Huntington's Thought

The binary of *Self and Other* constitutes a central axis in the conflict paradigms formulated by the Western mind, as it lends violence and confrontation a symbolic and existential legitimacy. The "Other" is not viewed as a party with whom mutual understanding or shared civilizational projects are possible, but rather as an identity necessity—constantly summoned to ensure the coherence and definition of the "Self." The Other is no longer a partner in the production of meaning; instead, it becomes an antithetical entity onto which the Western Self projects everything it refuses to acknowledge within itself. Thus, the relationship between Self and Other becomes one of negation rather than recognition, whereby the Self defines itself through the exclusion of the Other, not through reciprocal engagement.

Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* theory represents the most prominent manifestation of this logic, and its implications are deeply embedded in all the theory's foundational problems and hypotheses. The theory reconfigures the Other—particularly the Islamic Other—not as an independent civilizational actor, but as a *legitimized threat* that allows the West to reassert its sense of unity and missionary purpose in exporting fabricated ideals of democracy and liberty.

As Pierre Conesa aptly concludes: "The Other must be viewed as if he carries a potential threat" (Conesa 2015, 40).

Huntington's theory reproduced the anthropological reduction of the Other, transforming it into a hostile entity beyond reconciliation. The "Oriental" was no longer viewed as a culture to be understood, but rather as a "problem" to be feared; Islam ceased to be regarded as a religion and was reframed as a structural threat to global order. Thus, conflict shifted from the political realm to an ontological dimension, where exclusion came to be justified as a legitimate act of civilizational

self-defense. The relationship between *Self* and *Other* was no longer one of knowledge, but rather one that established the very grounds of conflict—producing the Western Self as a threatened identity entitled to defend itself through violence.

Difference was reduced to threat, dialogue to weakness, and domination to an existential necessity. In this way, a structure of violence became embedded within the theory itself, and was later institutionalized in discourses such as the *Clash of Civilizations*, the *War on Terror*, and the *securitization of identity*.

In truth, if the West—more than any other culture—has shown tremendous difficulty in dealing with the Other without resorting to an exoticizing or essentializing framework, it is precisely because it represents a culture that is, more than all others, dependent on the Other—a fossilized and imagined Other—to maintain its internal coherence and vitality. The West is in constant and growing need of staging the Other in order to produce an artificial self-image it cannot invent on its own (Dauphin 2025, 245). It is through such reductive templates that group identity and the Self are falsely constructed. These are the very same mechanisms employed by Theodor Herzl at the Basel Conference to promote his fabricated narrative, when he stated: "I believe that a nation is a historical group of people that endures because of a common enemy." He concluded, "The Jewish people do not need to define themselves; anti-Semites do it for them" (Conesa 2015, 36).

Within the framework of Huntingtonian theorization, the Other is no longer a mirror for self-reflection or a catalyst for critical introspection. Rather, the Other is reduced to a threatening entity summoned to justify fear and reinforce a sense of superiority. Diversity, instead of serving as a space for dialogue, becomes a pretext for exclusion. The Western *Self* sees in the Other a threat, not an opportunity for deeper self-understanding. Thus, the horizon closes on what could have been a profoundly human moment—an opportunity to rediscover shared humanity.

The Assumptions of the Clash Thesis and Its Epistemological Transformations

Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* theory represented a pivotal shift in Western thought toward the Other. It evolved from a cultural post–Cold War framework into an intellectual-security project grounded in civilizational and religious identity, rather than ideology and geography. The theory developed into an interpretive model that views the world through the lens of the "civilizational enemy," and became integrated into the broader framework of "securitization theories" that emerged in the 1980s, serving a Western project aimed at managing and reshaping the world through fear and control. Under the umbrella of "civilizational threat," academic fields and Western foreign policies were restructured. Civilizational affiliation was introduced as an indicator of potential danger, identity was turned into a security file, and Islam was reframed as a perpetual "green threat," following earlier Western obsessions

with the "red threat" and the "yellow peril." This discourse legitimized surveillance, intervention, and violence, resulting in counter-reactions that were framed as acts of identity defense—while the West categorized them as part of the "War on Terror," portraying them as rejections of Western values.

Under the weight of this reductive framing—laden with the language of threat and violence—conflict ceased to be interpreted as a disagreement between values or worldviews rooted in millennia-old civilizations. Instead, it was recast as an existential battle that demands the deployment of both hard and soft security tools. In this way, the *Clash of Civilizations* theory became deeply embedded in the heart of the securitization apparatus.

The West grew increasingly preoccupied with the perceived threat of Islam, "Islamic terrorism," or "Islamic fundamentalism," while the Islamic world was fragmented and diminished—culturally and ethnically—into isolated particles. Meanwhile, the fact that the vast majority of Muslims live under authoritarian regimes supported by the West and its democracies was largely ignored (Godwin 1994, 56).

The danger of the shift in Western discourse is most clearly manifested in the "securitization of the world of ideas and civilizations," whereby alternative visions and narratives are no longer treated as legitimate intellectual propositions but are instead classified as dangerous knowledge and symbolic threats. Any idea that falls outside the Western liberal lexicon is now subject to suspicion. In this context, theory is no longer a tool for understanding conflict but becomes a mechanism for managing and containing it—within a trajectory that institutionalizes enmity and militarizes thought according to a logic of domination and fear, rather than understanding and plurality.

It is no surprise, then, that Huntington's paper is nothing more than a reflection of an American need dictated by the demands of the moment, under the guise of epistemological theorization. As al-Saʿdī notes, Huntington's study on the *Clash of Civilizations* does not depart from this framework; it is a direct product of the Olin Institute's project on "The Changing Security Environment and American National Interests" (al-Saʿdī 2008, 156).

Here, one can begin to grasp one of the underlying motives behind the major shift—from identity to securitization, from culture to ideology, from enemy-construction to terrorism-construction, and from dialogue to conflict. This transition fulfills an insatiable desire rooted in the arrogant spirit of the founding fathers of violence and the American despotic elite, who established a state that, in their own words, was "the first country founded from nothing"—a phrase often expressed as "the first new nation" (al-Mawlā 2009, 18).What is often forgotten, however, is that this state was built upon the ruins of a genocided civilization—the Native American peoples. And it is through the same logic and discourse that the United States seeks to erase other civilizations, far older than itself by thousands of years, under the illusion of power and the reign of fear and terror.

The Transformation of the "Clash of Civilizations" Theory from Identity to Securitization

The Clash of Civilizations theory has left deep effects of civilizational anxiety and the growth of conflict tendencies—not only between different civilizations but even within the same civilization. It contributed to fueling violence and counter-violence and produced a wave of accelerated theorizing in the fields of securitization and threat construction. After Fukuyama and Huntington, the presence of security think tanks—such as *RAND*—doubled, adopting narratives of exclusion targeting moderate and regionally and internationally active Islamic movements (Khafaji 2007, 5). In this context, international conferences such as *ISA* and *ECPR* became active, and research on "grand theories" and "civilizational conflicts" increased, which restored the relevance of transnational approaches and cross-border networks, in addition to the invocation of dialectical and constructivist methodologies to understand the cultural and epistemological dynamics that Huntington considered a foundation for international conflict.

One possible explanation for this transformation lies in the epistemic explosion and the fluidity of information—driven by intensified points of contact and friction between civilizational groups, alongside growing efforts to break free from imperial and colonial domination. Yet a deeper indicator emerges in the transition of dominant Western interpretive paradigms—chief among them the *Clash of Civilizations*—into a state of theoretical stagnation and crisis. These paradigms increasingly reveal symptoms of exhaustion and analytical bankruptcy, having fallen into the traps of inconsistency and reductive oversimplification.

This shift has often been a direct response to the needs of Western political actors—particularly in the United States—in the post–Cold War era. As a result, intellectual theories were instrumentalized as tools for inflating the imagined image of the "enemy Other" and for justifying exceptional security policies.

In his book *The Crisis of the Modern World*, René Guénon contrasts traditional "ancient" or "customary" civilizations—which are distinguished by their unique characteristics but share a set of higher principles—with modern civilization, which he describes as "a civilization that does not acknowledge the existence of any higher principle," and moreover, "a civilization built solely on the denial of principles" (Dauphin 2025, 235). Furthermore, modern civilization, led by the West in its generality, is based on "agreements," not principles; and it is well known that agreements do not possess the cohesive force that "principles" entrenched in ancient civilizations hold. This makes it vulnerable to fragmentation and disintegration if the will to sustain it falters or if participants interpret it differently. Moreover, the values upon which Western civilization is built in the age of modernity and postmodernity—already distorted—are susceptible to dissolution in the face of the temptations of

power, domination, control, and the illusion of grandeur. (Dauphin 2025, 235)

It is thus natural, under these circumstances, for classical paradigms to collapse and enter a state of theoretical chaos, having lost their explanatory capacity to comprehend and frame the current international phase—marked by extreme ambiguity and complexity. Perhaps nothing reflects the exhaustion afflicting Western intellectual systems more clearly than the present-day obsession of Western thinkers with the "Post-" paradigm: post-humanism, post-modernism, post-capitalism, post-behaviorism, post-realism, post-history, post-ideology, and post-politics. This proliferation suggests that Western thought has largely exhausted its potential and is no longer capable of generating new visions to grasp the profound meanings and radical transformations unfolding in the world (Saadi 2008, 93). This also underscores how the simultaneous emergence of Fukuyama's and Huntington's theses reflects a deep confusion within the Western mind—oscillating between the promise of dominance and the prophecy of conflict. As a result, many thinkers have embraced the paradigm of "chaos" as a framework for interpreting the global landscape, drawing on scientific theories and historical analogies that point to a fragility reminiscent of the pre–world wars era (Saadi 2008, 101).

The Theory of Securitization and the Syndrome of Producing Violence and Terrorism

The Securitization School is considered one of the most prominent methodological and epistemological developments in the field of security studies after the end of the Cold War, in the early 1990s, under the leadership of Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, as an attempt to explain how ordinary social and political issues are transformed into "security issues" that require exceptional measures. It was then employed—or intended to be employed—at levels and perspectives that address issues greater than mere immigration and crime, as the Other in Western society began to be viewed from the perspective of securitization as a source of threat to the identity of society, and was seen as a representative of the incoming civilization.

It is true that securitization as a concept is not new to political, security, or even epistemological circles. The issue of securitizing the Other in Western theoretical or practiced thought is evident in the perception that anyone who differs from or opposes Western intellectual orientations and practices is considered a threat and is promoted as such. The matter of the enemy is taken for granted; it exists either objectively or subjectively, and what changes is only its form and model. For the West, the threat has neither receded nor vanished, but rather has taken different shapes that vary from time to time and from place to place (Abd al-Rafiq Kachout 2016, 132). What is striking, however, is the transformation of an entire intellectual school into a methodological and functional framework to serve the idea of civilizational threat, just as other schools have historically been employed to serve the goals of securitization

and fearmongering about the Other to dominate it—such as the Orientalist school, whose outputs were employed in this framework.

The idea of securitization falls within the theses of the Copenhagen School in the 1990s, but in this context, it represents an extension of what can be called the "Civilizational Securitization School," based on the "Exclusionary Narrative Cogito" (Exo-Cogito), which the Western epistemological systems established through a long trajectory of discourses and methodologies. This school shifted civilizations from the position of dialogue to the position of threat, securitizing them and treating them as a source of existential danger, which led to subjecting them to strict security approaches. The theory of securitization emerged within the same epistemological and political context that produced the theory of the Clash of Civilizations, and both share a reliance on discourse as a tool to transform difference into conflict and to justify exceptional policies through security institutions and their affiliated think tanks.

This transformation had a significant impact on the trajectory of terrorism, accelerating its evolution from local to global, and shifting its target from corrupt regimes to the imperialist colonial West. Numerous studies by Western scholars have documented this shift in discourse. In a study titled *"Hyperterrorism: The New War"*, edited by the French researcher specialized in strategic affairs, François Heisbourg, the book summarizes the events of New York and Washington and their global impact. It highlights the key global factors that led to the emergence of this form of "hyperterrorism," among them the West's adoption of the "Clash of Civilizations" discourse. Heisbourg notes that some American politicians called for avoiding the use of the term "Clash of Civilizations" to prevent provocation (Heisbourg 2001, 60).

Fawaz Gerges explains how the securitization discourse and the Clash of Civilizations narrative encouraged some groups to shift—unprecedentedly—from fighting the "near enemy" (the corrupt ruling regimes) to the "far enemy" (the West that supports these regimes). This led to a wave of new attacks in Europe and America and expanded the scope of confrontation, especially following the events of September 11, which marked the beginning of a new era of conflict and confrontation (Gerges 2005, 26).

The securitization of the Other focused on Muslims through terrorism just as it focused on Mexicans through illegal immigration. Here we can clearly see how the threat moved from being objective to being subjective; terrorism, for example, should have been addressed independently from Muslims, and illegal immigration separately from Mexicans. This means that the idea of securitizing the Other has failed to describe the true threat: Muslims are not the danger, but terrorism is; Mexicans are not the danger, but illegal immigration is. (Abd al-Rafiq Kachout 2016, 130).

Traditionally, security was understood within its military and political framework; however, the contemporary meaning has expanded to include ideological and cultural threats such as immigration and religious and ethnic differences. With large populations moving to the West, the sense of danger escalated, and Islam was depicted

as the most threatening "Other" to the nation-state. It was classified among major threats such as violence and drugs, paving the way for the adoption of strict preventive policies. Thus, security came to encompass cultural and identity dimensions alongside the military and political. (Kachout 2016, 135).

Therefore, in the contemporary Western context, the Islamic presence or immigration is no longer viewed as humanitarian issues, but rather as civilizational threats that justify strict security policies. Islam was promoted as the "green peril," and immigration as a breach threatening the cohesion of the nation-state. In this way, the logic of civilizational conflict became a symbolic tool for invoking threat, while the discourse of securitization dominated the public sphere, producing preventive policies that reinforce fear of the "Other" at the expense of dialogue and diversity.

Clash of Civilizations: From the Securitization of the World of Ideas to the Securitization of Civilizations

It is profoundly dangerous that a wide segment of elites, think tanks, universities, and foreign policy circles in many countries have moved toward the securitization of the world of ideas under the guise of combating the terminology and discourse of terrorism. This has turned into an open war against any thought that does not align with Western epistemological systems or serve the interests of states and regimes—a dangerous precedent unprecedented in the history of thought in this manner.

In the processes of enemy construction, the manufacturing of terrorism, securitization, and the imagined clash of civilizations within Western thought, the primary target in confrontation and opposition is the realm of ideas—from which civilizations derive their perceptions, concepts, and tools of engagement. The means of conducting such confrontation are manifold: either by invoking the past, with its symbolic dimensions and accumulated legacy of conflict, or by updating the tools of intellectual securitization—intensifying theorization across various fields of knowledge and channeling their outputs toward demonizing, threatening, and instilling fear of the Other.

Think tanks play a pivotal role in this context by directing elites and academics through the massive production of studies and indicators that reinforce the narrative of conflict and terrorism. The Global Terrorism Index (GTI), issued annually by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), is a prime example. It has tracked trends since 2000 and adopts a definition of terrorism that focuses on "the use of unlawful violence by non-state actors to achieve political, religious, or social objectives through intimidation." This definition, widely used in reports from institutions aligned with state authorities, excludes state actions and redirects attention solely to non-official actors, thereby reinforcing a unilateral narrative on terrorism (Abd al-Muttalib 2024, 1).

And if securitization, in general, according to the theorists of the Copenhagen School, is the process through which one of the actors (a representative of the government or authority) declares, through an official discourse to the public, that a certain issue or problem is considered an existential threat to one of the referent objects of security (Abu Douh 2021, 1), then the West has gone a long way—not only since the early 1990s but also years or even centuries before—in securitizing the world of ideas and individuals outside the scope of the inhabitants and representatives of Western civilization. Through media, political, intellectual, and security apparatuses, it continuously practices securitization to the extent that securitization has become a daily, sustained act, evolving into a dominant societal behavior and culture directed against everything that is "Other."

It is worth noting, as we discuss the dangers of securitization and its reverse transformations, that despite the effectiveness of securitization discourse in some contexts, the continued promotion of the threat of radical movements may lead to counterproductive results—spreading their discourse rather than containing it. Ideas, by their very nature, cannot be imprisoned or suppressed; they spread through their value and humanity, not through coercive power. In the realm of intellectual conflict, ideas compete and cross-pollinate not through force, but through their capacity to resonate and spread. Had the West allowed room for ideas to interact freely, the human condition would have been much better. Even Samuel Huntington himself admitted that the West's supremacy was not due to its ideas or values, but to its ability to wield organized violence—a truth Westerners tend to ignore, while others cannot afford the luxury of forgetting it (Huntington 1999, 51).

Thus, the problem does not lie in the realm of ideas to which various civilizations belong, but rather in their transformation into violence against the Other, or in attempts to distort or suppress them by means of weapons, power, and securitization rather than through counter-ideas. Étienne de La Boétie writes in his *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*: "Grant error the right to exist, and it will die of itself" (La Boétie 2014, 40). In this regard, Graham Fuller and Ian Lesser argue that "violent groups" grow stronger and more attractive when they are repeatedly and publicly referred to by high-ranking officials as the primary threat. The accusations directed at "fundamentalism" suggest to supporters of radical currents that Islamic movements must be right, and that they deserve support—so long as the West maintains such hostility and incites others against them (Mohamed Nasr 2005, 9).

Conclusion

This study sought to deconstruct the deep structure of the "Clash of Civilizations" thesis, viewing it as an extension of a Western epistemic system shaped historically around sharp dualities—through which it formulated its self-awareness and its perception of the Other by means of domination and exclusion. From Heraclitus to Huntington, and from Renan to Bernard Lewis, a civilizational narrative was constructed that rendered the Other a mere functional being, whose negation becomes essential to the Self's completion. The study demonstrated that this mode of thinking is not confined to politics and discourse, but extends into the philosophical and epistemological structures that produce the concepts of "identity," "enemy," and "dialogue" within frameworks of conflict. This, in turn, has contributed to forming an intellectual environment that reinterprets difference as a threat, and establishes sharp dualities (Self/Other, West/Islam...) as foundational structures for conflict and superiority—thus paving the way for the emergence of violence and the discursive, political, and behavioral production of terrorism.

In contrast to this conflictual instrumentalization of civilizational dualities—as manifested in Huntington's thesis—the critical reading opens a new horizon for reinterpreting these binaries as spaces of interaction rather than mutual exclusion, by stripping them of their primordial antagonism and integrating them into the context of human mutual recognition (*ta'āruf*). While humanity's movement toward civilizational integration is certainly non-linear and obstructed by complex political and cultural factors, the persistence in adopting the logic of confrontation only leads to the production and fragmentation of violence and extremism, as a predictable reaction governed by the natural law of counteraction (*tadāfu'*), thereby perpetuating a closed cycle of action and reaction.

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Аисауи Адел

Теза о сукобу цивилизација: Од секуритизације сфере идеја до производње тероризма

Сажетак: Ова студија настоји да анализира тезу Самјуела Хантингтона о „сукобу цивилизација", коју је представио као покушај тумачења нове динамике међународних односа у периоду након Хладног рата. Ова теорија полази од претпоставке да ће будући сукоби настајати између различитих цивилизација на основу њихових културних и верских разлика, а не политичких и економских. Такво виђење призвало је филозофију сукоба као централног чиниоца и занемарило универзалну и непроменљиву стварност интеракције, интеграције, хармоније и дијалектичког прожимања култура и цивилизација. То је, заузврат, довело до појаве феномена секуритизације сфере идеја и уверења, што је створило окружење погодно за насиље и противнасиље и подстакло појединце и групе да прибегну насиљу као средству изражавања отпора културној и политичкој хегемонији. Такође је подстакло тежњу ка сукобу, доминацији и цивилизацијском егоцентризму, што је директно допринело настанку и производњи тероризма у његовим различитим политичким, верским и идеолошким контекстима, као и његовом преласку са локалног на глобални ниво.

Кључне речи: сукоб, цивилизације, тероризам, секуритизација идеја, секуритизација цивилизација