



# The Centre for the Study of European Politics and Society

## THE WEST, EUROPE AND THE ISLAM

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1. Twelve years ago Samuel Huntington, professor in Harvard, published his article 'The Clash of Civilizations' in 'Foreign Affairs'. It became one of the most debated and criticized articles of the last decade. His publication is a good starting point to look at the issue with the knowledge we have today, twelve years later.

2. What did Huntington want to say? In a global world differences between cultures are real and important and the fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future. The clash of civilizations will replace the clash of ideologies that was the dominant conflict of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Conflicts between civilizations will increase due to an increased interaction, and the most pronounced conflict will be between the West and the Islam. This type of conflict will not only take place between countries, but will also manifest itself inside Western countries due to demographic changes: a very young population in Northern Africa and the Middle East combined with a continuous migration to Western Europe. In his article Huntington refers to other writers who had already expressed the same opinion: Akbar, an Indian Muslim writer, and Bernard Lewis, a British professor of Middle Eastern Studies who became professor in Princeton in 1974. Huntington also mentioned the writer S. Naipaul who had argued that Western civilization is the universal civilization that fits all men. Huntington rejects Naipaul's opinion by referring to the discourse in non-Western countries in which Western civilization is seen as conducting a human rights imperialism. In his conclusion Huntington pleads for improved cooperation and union in Western civilization, in particular between the European and North American components. Also incorporation of Eastern Europe and Latin America in the West is a recommendation of Huntington. The West has to maintain its military and economic power to protect and safeguard its interests. In the long-term an effort is needed to find common elements between civilizations, especially with the Islam, in order to co-exist.

What can we say about Huntington's opinion, with the knowledge we have twelve years later?

*Fundamentalist Islam versus the West.*

3. The September 11 attacks became a turning point in the general security environment in the world. The attacks had a very symbolic meaning: in the heart of the West (New York and Washington) and conducted by Islam fundamentalists. Eighteen of the nineteen terrorists had their origins in Saudi Arabia, got their mission from Al-Qaidi in Afghanistan, lived and studied in Germany and, finally, carried out their attacks in the USA. In the weeks after the attacks Saudi Arabia denied the fact that the terrorists were Saudi Arabian citizens or were born and raised in the kingdom.

4. Huntington and others are confirmed in their idea that the most pronounced conflict of our time is the conflict between the West and the fundamentalist movement in the Islam. Although we may not make the mistake to generalize and we have to keep in mind that several tendencies exist within the countries of the Islam, such as Turkey. The Islam countries form an arch stretching from Morocco to Indonesia and The Philippines. A series of military interventions took place in this region during the last decade: East Timor, Afghanistan, Iraq and Kosovo.

5. I would like to add this. The Western military interventions occurred in countries or territories which we call '*failed states*' in the literature on international law and politics. It is a common characteristic that the central authority ceased to exist and anarchy and oppression of minorities is a recurrent ingredient. Although this characterization is not only to be found in some

Islamic countries since many African countries did end up in the same chaos after decolonization. However, Islam fundamentalists conduct an ideological battle against the West, whereas African countries regressed into domestic tribal warfare.

6. Huntington did not get it right when he defined the most pronounced conflict of today as a clash of civilizations or cultures. The ongoing conflict is an ideological conflict. An ideology is a matrix of ideas, and especially of values that shape society. The Cold War was an example of an ideological conflict, or the fight against Nazism. The West is now confronted with a political ideology under the guise of Islam in its fundamentalist interpretation, which should always be distinguished from the modernizing tendencies within Islam. The viewpoint of the present-day conflict as an ideological conflict was recently confirmed by the Dutch AIVD report of 23 December 2004, 'From dawa to jihad'. Islam fundamentalists have rooted their political ideology in a literal and traditional application of the Quran as explained by the laws of Shari'ah. It has very concrete results. Women are not allowed to drive a car in Saudi Arabia; they have to wear a scarf and may not participate in public life. A strict separation of men and women is obliged in all public places, such as schools and universities. Political objectives are central in the Islam ideology: the restoration of the caliphate, a theocracy and oppression of non-Muslims. Let us not forget that Islam is the most proselyte religion of our time. The oppression of non-Muslims has been regularly reported by the media with regard to some countries such as Sudan, but considerably less media attention has been paid to the harassment of Christian Arabs in Nazareth and Bethlehem by Hamas until this minority leaves. Many Christian Palestinians now live in the USA or in Europe. The media reporting on the Palestinian Arabs is indeed distorted and monopolized by the conflict with Israel and thus obscures the general context of what happens on the ground.

7. Neo-fundamentalist and radical Islam legitimizes itself by a literal reading of the Quran, and its ultimate purpose is the design of a new Muslim identity by using the religious/Islamic terminology. Islam fundi's reject the cultural and traditional dimensions of religion and replace them by an Islamic code of conduct that suits in every situation, from Afghanistan to Amsterdam or at American university campuses. Islam fundi's reject traditional Islam as being demoded and doomed to loose in the global world. Therefore they want to destroy traditional society, not to enhance it. Also this fact is an argument against the clash of civilizations theory of Huntington. By rejecting traditional Islam society, Islam fundi's see a unique opportunity to create a universal religious identity unconnected to a particular culture, and certainly the Western civilization which is regarded as corrupt and decadent. Rebuilding Islam, dissociated from any culture, enables fundamentalist Islam to manifest itself in any circumstances and in any places. It is the transcendence of culture and local government. In the eyes of the Islam fundi's nothing less than a universal Islam identity is the new project of Islam.

8. Radical Islam appeals to the uprooted and disaffected youth in search of an identity beyond the lost cultures of their parents and beyond the thwarted expectations of a better life in the West (Oliver Roy, Radical Islam appeals to the rootless, in: Financial Times, October 12, 2004). They are not part of the economic and scientific education of the West. Instead they dream of a virtual Islamic community or 'ummah' of a worldwide Islam that gives them a place in the era of globalization. It is evident that their struggle or 'jihad' is not based on the liberation of a specific territory, but finds its expression and perception on the internet and its websites and chatrooms, also in some mosques and Muslim schools. Internet and chatrooms replace the lost social roots. Thus new technologies fit perfectly in the emerging fundamentalist Islam. An example is

the story of the Beirut-based station, al Manar, the media arm of the Hezbollah. French media authority CSA had accused Al Manar of violating a ban on hate speech and had for this reason outlawed Al Manar. The station is broadcasting videos glorifying suicide bombers as “blessed martyrs”. But the ban may have a mere symbolic effect. Al Manar is eluding the ban by broadcasting via satellite technology that erodes national boundaries. Our legal systems and political authorities must also make the necessary adjustments to combat the spread of hate crimes by means of cross-border technology. Al Manar is now relayed through satellites, two of which are owned by American firms, and through Paris-based Eutelsat, Nilesat (an Egyptian satellite company, and Arabsat whose major shareholder is Saudi Arabia. Today the station draws about 10 million daily viewers, from San Francisco to Tehran.

9. The conflict between Islam fundamentalism and the West is a direct conflict, contrary to the Cold War when bloody confrontations took place in third countries such as Angola, Mozambique, Vietnam. Western citizens are the object of attacks abroad (for example in Bali) or attacks are carried out on Western soil (September 11, Mosow, Madrid). Islam fundi’s are better organized than previously thought, which is one of the conclusions of the September 11 attacks. Islam fundi’s do not accept the general codes of conduct as embodied in international humanitarian law, such as the principle that civilians may never be the object of an attack. A foreshadowing of rejection of international codes, being part of international law, was already clear on 10 December 1948, the day that the ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the UN General Assembly. Four countries voted against: three socialist countries and Saudi Arabia. This country could not accept the declaration because of the Quran. In the eyes of Islam fundi’s all means are legal and everybody is a potential target. In this apocalyptic worldview of the total jihad war the use of weapons of mass destruction may be justified to achieve the

ultimate goals. Fear of a ‘doomsday scenario’ is not only the concern of the US government, although most European governments prefer to discuss this threat behind closed doors. For instance, a dirty bomb in the Paris metro would close the metro or parts of it for decades.

*Better cooperation among Western countries, in particular between the USA and Europe.*

10. This is Huntington’s major recommendation which I subscribe. Western cooperation dates back from the end of WWII. Today Western cooperation is not limited to Western Europe and North America, but also includes Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Russia. External security of these democracies is protected by NATO and its partnership with Russia. The most important question that should be put forward is whether Western cooperation will improve in the face of the emerging threats or will be diluted by diverging world views and political perceptions. Much depends on the tendencies in Western societies. The West is not a monolithic bloc. The events of September 11 have shown that different political perceptions have gained ground. I will try to explain this.

11. The USA considers itself at war with Al-Qaidi and affiliated groups. Proof of it is the series of military operations in Afghanistan and in other countries as well as the detention of captured fighters in Guantanamo Bay, which is in conformity with the laws of armed conflicts. This perception is shared by the UK and Australia, but also Russia in its fight against Chechen rebels. Within this thinking the policy of ‘pre-emptive strike’ is rational. Contrary to the Cold War, when nuclear mutual deterrence could constrain both opposing blocs (because each side wanted to stay alive), mutual deterrence cannot be effective vis-à-vis suicide commando’s and their structures. Within

Islam fundamentalism a discourse of martyrology is the rule and the 'shaheed' is a popular hero. The combination of a mentality of suicide and weapons of mass destruction leaves us no other choice than to act pre-emptively against bases and infrastructure of terrorist groups. If necessary, action is needed against those countries that allow terrorists to operate or finance them. In Western Europe the doctrine of "pre-emptive strike" is not popular for the reasons I will explain.

12. The countries of Western Europe were not the victim of a terrorist attack of the dimensions of September 11. Western Europe considers the fight against terrorism as a matter of law enforcement, as if the operations of Al-Qaida and others fall under the common denominator of 'crimes'. Europe does not recognize any military dimension of the fight against terrorism. But more is at stake. After the Cold War a majority of Europeans begin to believe that the USA is derailed in its foreign policy. We notice this belief clearly at the Left and sometimes at the nationalist movements (such as in France) which have always been suspicious of 'capitalist America'. It does not need much to understand that the European Left has found a common platform with Muslim organizations by rejecting the USA. The Left and Muslims demonstrating together in the streets of Brussels or Paris against US foreign policy is not new any longer. Searching for a new identity of Europe is developed by anti-American feelings. Islam fundi's in Europe and elsewhere took over the old enemies of the European Left: imperialism and capitalism. We may say that the old Marxists of the sixties and seventies in Europe have been replaced by the Bin-Ladists who feel rejected anyway.

13. The attacks in The Netherlands and elsewhere in 2004 have again added more clarity to the clash between radical Islam and the West. The report of the Dutch intelligence agency (AIVD report) of 23 December 2004 speaks about an ideology of strong opposition against the Western way of life, albeit of

a tiny minority of Muslim immigrants. Israel has not been mentioned and also for this reason the report is important. There is no escapism. The recent incidents in The Netherlands have been reported by Newsweek and The Washington Times as a '*mini clash of civilizations*'. Meanwhile the Dutch government has started to develop a corrective policy and I am convinced that The Netherlands will succeed, even in the short term. One of the proposals under consideration is a 'Patriot Act'-like law which makes it legally possible to strip citizens of their citizenship and deport them if they engage in extremist activities.

*The military operations against Iraq: lessons learned.*

14. Eastern Europe, Italy, Spain and the UK voted for, whereas the trio Germany, France and Belgium voted against. In the UN Security Council this trio was even more fierceful against the US viewpoint than China. More or less at the same time this trio proposed to set up a European military facility, raising suspicion that their proposal has more to do with the wish of creating a 'counterbalance' for US power in the world than with protecting Europe. More political clarity is needed on this issue. But there is more to say about the latest developments in the European Union. France and Germany more and more resemble. Both countries embrace 'the welfare state' based on high taxation, a central role of the government in the socio-economic sphere, the belief in subsidies and an economy guided and co-financed by the government. The welfare state model is disguised by a pseudo-scientific rhetoric. Big government is readily accepted by a large part of the intellectuals, social organizations and political parties of the center-left. In France government interference in the economy has ever been accepted since the period of mercantilism, with the result that also center-right parties accept big government in economics. In Belgium the Left is lyrical about the 'Rhineland model', which is regarded as an

example of a civilized and humanitarian society, even a '*mission civilisatrice*' in the world – see also Robert Kagan, *Power & Weakness*, Policy Review, June/July 2002.

15. The European Union has a tradition of bureaucratic governance, a culture of subsidies and the belief in the moulding of society by means of an elite of civil servants and governments. The European Union and its policies are an extrapolation of the Franco-German policies. New members of Central and Eastern Europe are required to conduct a similar policy and type of society in order to be recognized as full members of Europe. The constant pressure by Germany on Central Europe to increase taxes is well known. Germany speaks about 'distortion of the internal market' of the EU whereas low taxes are badly needed by the economies of Central and Eastern Europe for their economic development. The central intellectual argument of the EU/Franco-German project is the 'internal market' and its external component, the trade policy. The EU is in the process of creating a common foreign and security policy and also in this domain the logic of the 'internal market' is used to project the Franco-German model of welfare state into the world. More and more the Franco-German model comes in marked contrast with the English speaking world which has developed a different view of society, economy and, more importantly, the role of government.

16. The foreign policy of France and Germany is more and more diverging from US foreign policy. All indicators show this since September 11. The September 11 attacks have shown great feelings of solidarity, but this was only for a while. Even in the comments following the September 11 attacks left-wing intellectuals and journalists acknowledged the great drama of the event, but stressed that it would not change established policies. The opposite happened: September 11 became a key event in the post WWII world. Europe

looks at international terrorism from the viewpoint of law enforcement, whereas the US government also acknowledges a military dimension in the fight against terrorism<sup>1</sup> The military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq clearly demonstrate the different viewpoints. The regime at Guantanamo Bay is in accordance with the rules of armed conflict, and it is precisely because the detention regime recognizes the military dimension of the fight against terrorism that opponents cannot accept the legal distinction between illegal fighters and PoW's. Germany, France and Belgium deny any armed conflict with Islamofascism. Political denial explains the presence of French, German and Belgian troops in Afghanistan as 'UN peace-keeping operations' whereas the real goal of the military presence is the fight against Taliban and Al-Qaida and the introduction of democracy. Political denial inevitably puts the strategy into the sphere of diplomacy and agreements with countries which support terrorist organizations and violate international law. Iran and its secret nuclear weapons program are just one example of the diplomatic approach favoured by Europe.

*Two Europe's in the making.*

17. French and German foreign policy is Mediterranean-oriented, characterized by intense links with Arab states. Israel is constantly criticized and blamed by France and to a lesser degree by Germany. As a matter of fact Germany and France are becoming Mediterranean countries with a rapid process of Islamization. Demographic estimates put the Muslim population in France at half the population by the year 2050. Europe did not survive 1945 as a separate entity and civilization. The geographical area called 'Europe' is in rapid transition and enters an unknown new identity. For these reasons the United

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<sup>1</sup> On 13 November 2001 President Bush signed a military order entitled 'Detention, Treatment and Trial of Certain Non-Citizens in the War against Terrorism'. This presidential guideline declared that the attacks of September 11 2001 '... were on a scale that has created a state of armed conflict that requires the use of the United States Armed Forces.'

Kingdom, the Scandinavian countries and The Netherlands will most probably dissociate from the Franco-German zone and develop their own identity. Italy and Austria may seek to associate themselves with this Northern Dimension. On the other end, France and Germany are engaged in an ever closer union and expect obedience from countries such as Belgium and Spain – the Mediterranean Dimension. It is their ambition to merge into one Great Mediterranean Union, using association agreements, in some cases membership to Mediterranean states and the Barcelona Process. A free trade zone is the economic translation of this ultimate political goal. Looking back to the diplomatic viewpoints of the last decade, their declarations are similar to the declarations of the Arab League. Israel and the European Jewish communities do not seem to fit well in this identity-in-transition and are facing exclusion and marginalization for the sake of the trans-Mediterranean unification. Progressive and left-wing parties in Europe are an important force behind this process. It guarantees them new votes when Muslim migrants get voting rights. We know that the socialist parties in Belgium will gain because of this operation. Already the majority of elected socialist members of the Brussels City Council are from Muslim origin. Socialist electoral gains can also be understood by the fact that most immigrants originate from authoritarian societies, ruled by dictatorships which cultivate the submissiveness of the individual to officialdom. The great emphasis on official authorities, also part of the worldview of the European Left, makes voting for left-wing parties even attractive and self-evident. It is mentally much more difficult to become liberal and modern because it implies a dramatic break with their education and thinking. Moreover, anti-American rhetoric common in the Franco-German entente is also present in the countries of the Islam for other reasons. It is no coincidence that France is regarded by Arab states as the most reliable partner and that Arafat dies in a Paris hospital and is honoured with a presidential farewell. It does not fall out of the blue skies that an overwhelming majority of public opinion in Arab states, France and Germany

consider the USA as the biggest threat to world peace. Recent EU opinion polls revealed this dimension too.

18. The Islamization of the Franco-German entente – as a matter of fact a rather strange combination of secularism and Islamism – provokes at the same time resistance of the local population which wants to maintain its lifestyle and values. The dynamics of demographic and political unification across the Mediterranean is driven by the big European cities and the national political elites. Resistance in the form of anti-establishment parties (such as Le Pen, Vlaams Blok/Belang and the list of Pim Fortuyn) is the predictable result of badly managed migration and left-wing political ambitions. Summing up, the ongoing trans-Mediterranean unification is the work of city elites and national elites without ever having consulted the entire population. As a matter of fact the dramatic decision for this dynamic had already been taken implicitly during the seventies, the time of oil crises and the beginning of the Euro-Arab Dialogue. For sure this fundamental trend moulds the direction of the EU's foreign policies.

19. The conflict-in-the-making between the 'left and progressive side' and the local anti-establishment side endangers seriously the social cohesion of the Franco-German zone of influence. Combined with slow economic growth – Germany and France are not the big economic engine of Europe, not even after monetary unification – and high levels of unemployment it creates enough opportunities for mutual accusations and intimidations. Democratic parties such as the liberal parties and Christian democrats face more and more the prospect of being squeezed by the two political antagonists. The EU itself will become more and more a rallying or dividing symbol as well as an instrument for both antagonists. Lack of consensus among EU countries on their identity and role in

the world enhances the growing apart of the two Europe's. This is the state of affairs so far.

In the light of the previous comments it seems too early to predict whether the transatlantic partnership will become stronger, or weaker. The USA will most probably adopt a wait-and-see attitude towards the European Union, acting as a more quiet observer at the unraveling historical changes within the 'heartland' of Europe – see Victor Davis Hanson, *Soft Power, Hard Truths*, in: *Wall Street Journal*, February 22, 2005.

*Reconciliation is possible.*

20. Huntington pleads for reconciliation between civilizations, although this is only achievable in the long term. However, Huntington remains vague with regard to any strategy. He only gives the advice to identify common elements between civilizations.

21. Reconciliation is in my view only realistic and achievable if we can agree on modernity which has to fulfill certain conditions:

A free and democratic society in which scientific thinking is learned and encouraged.

Democracy may be defined by three constitutive components: (1) free and fair general elections and the continuous political participation of the citizens; (2) freedom of association, for example to establish political parties and trade unions; (3) a free and open public debate in which all opinions may be expressed, even unpopular or shocking opinions, but with the exception to calls for hate and/or violence. Scientific thinking and reasoning is a fundamental

value like democracy. Unfortunately scientific thinking is not on the list of European values mentioned by article 6 of the EU treaty. This is a fundamental shortcoming.

22. The Western countries have a political duty to support and assist the modernizing tendencies in the Islam countries which are willing to defend the elements of modernity mentioned before. More freedom and democracy in Islam countries, and scientific classes throughout the entire education process from the primary school onwards is urgently needed.

23. In addition, the West may no longer give leeway to dictatorships, because a political dialogue with dictatorships is just impossible. The EU association agreement with Syria, signed in 2004, is unacceptable because Syria is a police state and the EU agreement confirms the authority of the police state. At the same time US Congress adopted the ‘Syria Accountability and Lebanon Act’, a bi-partisan act that obliges the administration to sanction Syria. Unfortunately, the wrong and naïve idea of conducting a political dialogue with dictatorships also persists in the United Nations. At the time of the Darfur crisis Sudan was a member of the UN Human Rights Commission. Yes, Darfur is a Sudanese province. Even the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan did not even mention the word ‘democracy’ when he addressed the UN General Assembly on the ‘rule of law’ in September 2004, as if the rule of law can be disconnected from democracy. If the future development of international law were in the hands of the majority of UN member states, the free democracy would eventually become illegal within a decade. To end up, the peaceful co-existence between democracies and dictatorships – an inherited cardinal rule from the Cold War – is no longer possible. This political outcome was not predicted by Huntington.