Chapter 6
HUNTINGTON’S DEFENCE OF HIS THESIS

6.1 Introduction

When Huntington published his original article in the *Foreign Affairs* in 1993 articulating his clash of the civilisations thesis he probably never expected it to face such a widespread challenge and criticism. But having faced serious criticisms immediately after the publication of his article, he mounted a strong defence of his position, initially through another article in the *Foreign Affairs* under the title “If Not Civilisations, What?” and subsequently through many speeches and interviews. His book ‘The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of the World Order’ which was published in 1996 was written with the intention of overcoming many of the criticisms that were heaped on him from 1993 to 1996. Thus his book, apart from restating his thesis, also sought to answer many of the questions raised and criticisms leveled against him by his detractors.

It has been Huntington’s habit of targeting those who did not accept his ideas or theses. He has always exhibited his determination to defend his ideas and theses especially against his strong detractors and contemporaries. For Huntington, the 1993 episode was nothing new though, because much earlier in 1970 in the context of the Vietnam War he had already tasted the bitterness of challenge when Noam Chomsky had severely criticised and challenged him over his position as regards America’s war in Vietnam and in that instance too he had mounted a similar defence. Huntington, who mostly tows the line of American administration and Western worldview, in mounting a strong defence of his position at that time, had stated that Chomsky had “misrepresented”(1) his contentions, to which Chomsky had promptly reacted and ably succeeded in demolishing most of Huntington’s defence. (2) The situation after the expounding of The Clash thesis in 1993 was not much different, though much more compounded, because of the
vast scale and substantiality of criticisms. Consequently, since 1993, Huntington has been constantly on the defensive, very often using the best defence, of being on the offensive.

Said Shirazi insightfully points out how Huntington has been adept at defending his thesis “To be fair, Huntington’s thorough efforts to defend his thesis against all comers sometimes results in a balanced summary of opposing views, delivered in a readable, pre-chewed, S.A.T. prose, making his book potentially useful even for people who disagree with him. His clip file rehash drawn from newspapers and policy journals is particularly good on Russia’s long-standing ambivalence towards Europe and on the Islamic revival of the past thirty years. One can only hope this is why grad schools are assigning it, as a spark to discussion or a straw dummy to tear apart. Furthermore; Huntington is insightful on the dynamics of social change, the way democratization and a rise in status directly produces a second-generation de-assimilation and a rediscovery of ethnic identity and pride.” (3) However it needs to be pointed out that Huntington’s defence and criticism of his detractors has been selectively directed at those who seemed to deal the strongest blow to his ideas and theses. Huntington has been on the defensive almost throughout his academic scholarly career and as stated earlier even before The Clash issue. A brief look at his defence of his thesis is undertaken here.

6.2 Post 1993 Period

In his first defence of the thesis through an article in the Foreign Affairs, bearing the title “If Not Civilisations, What?” Huntington strongly advocated his thesis as a paradigm to explain the post Cold War world. In this article he sets out to make a case for the need of a paradigm, arising out of the fundamental human necessity to simplify reality through concepts, theories, models and paradigms. To overcome the confusion of the new era, he says, intellectual constructs are a must and here he takes recourse to positions of William James and Thomas Kuhn (4),
which have highlighted the role of paradigms in human existence. Defending his thesis, Huntington says that “displacement of one paradigm, which has become increasingly incapable of explaining new or newly discovered facts, by a new paradigm that accounts for those facts in a more satisfactory fashion”. (5) Using Kuhn’s argument that paradigms are needed to explain anomalies, Huntington says that his paradigm better explains the post Cold War world, its new development and anomalies. His contention is that his paradigm lays out a new map of the changing post Cold War world and asserts that his explanation is by far better than any other at that point. Relying on Kuhn’s statement that “anomalous events do not falsify a paradigm”, he states that “A paradigm is disapproved only by the creation of an alternative paradigm that accounts for more crucial facts in equally simple or simpler terms”. (6)

Ironically, Huntington uses the criticism of his thesis as a justification that his paradigm is reliable and effective, when he says “The debates the civilisational paradigm has generated around the world show that, in some measure, it strikes home, it either accords with reality as people see it or it comes close enough so that people who do not accept it have to attack it”. (7) In his unapologetic and defiant response to criticism of his thesis, he mounts a counter-offensive against Ajami, Mahbubani, Weeks, Binyan, and others who not only challenged his thesis but tried to pick holes in his civilisational paradigm. Much of his defence comes in the form of repeating and reaffirming most of the ideas and positions he had already spelt out in his original article.

He emphatically justifies his civilisational paradigm by saying “A civilisational approach explains much and orders much of the ‘bloomin’ buzzin’ confusion’ of the post Cold War world, which is why it has attracted so much debate around the world. Can any other paradigm do better? If not civilisations, what?” (8) He counter attacks his detractors by saying that they “did not provide any compelling alternative picture of the world.” He derisively retorts “At best they suggested one pseudo-alternative and one unreal alternative”.(9)
He terms the statist paradigm as pseudo-alternative “for constructing totally irrelevant and artificial opposition between states and civilisations” (10) Huntington, reaffirming his belief that states are civilisational entities, says that “with the demise of three worlds, nation states increasingly define their identity and their interests in civilisational terms”. (11) He reiterates that “Our world is one of overlapping groupings of states brought together in varying degrees by history, culture, religion, language, location and institutions. At the broadest level these groupings are civilisational”. (12) Vehemently opposing the ‘one world’ alternative, Huntington pitches for the ‘religious alternative’ giving each major religion a civilisational cloak.

Huntington also vociferously rejects the argument that the middle class will thwart the clash of civilisations, by quoting from Khuswant Singh and others, and saying that the middle class, especially in India, is itself fanning the religious revivalism and fundamentalism. In his own words “In India, as in other societies, fundamentalism is on the rise and is largely a middle class phenomenon”. (13) Instead of seeing the middle class as a leveller of all conflicts and particularly religious conflict, Huntington considers it as the harbinger and bearer of the religious conflicts and civilisational wars of the future.

Huntington expresses his unequivocal belief in the civilisational paradigm thus, “Wherever one turns, the world is at odds with itself. If differences in civilisations are not responsible for these conflicts, what is?” (14) He ventures that “civilisations as meaningful entities accords with the way in which people see and experience reality”. (15) Huntington’s final salvo in defence of his position, is the reassertion that, “History has not ended. The world is not one. Civilisations unite and divide human kind. The force making for clashes between civilisations can be contained only if they are recognised. In a “world of different civilisations”, as my article concluded, each “will have to learn to co-exist with the others” What ultimately counts for the people is not political ideology or economic interest. Faith and Family, blood and belief, are what people identify with and what they
will fight and die for. And that is why the clash of civilisations is replacing the Cold War as a central phenomenon of global politics, and why a civilisational paradigm provides, better than any alternative, a useful starting point for understanding and coping with the changes going on in the world.”(16)

After the publication of his book “The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of the World Order” once again Huntington’s thesis came under stringent attack by critics. In the National Interest Pierre Hassner had very critically reviewed Huntington’s book and termed Huntington’s thesis as “morally objectionable and politically dangerous.” (17) and Huntington responded with a defensive article in the same journal. Huntington’s diatribe was targeted against Hassner though in the same issue, apart from the critical review of ‘The Clash’ by Pierre Hassner there were other writings referring to ‘The Clash’ such as Wang Gungwui’s insightful review of his book and favourable articles by Peter Berger, Charles Horner, Robert Pease, Jeffrey Gedwin, and Andrew Mango. Huntington defends his book as well as himself by stating “In the last issue of the National Interest, Pierre Hassner wrote a doubly bad review of my book The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of the World Order” (18) He further says that Hassner’s review is “highly unfavourable” and “mixture of disingenuousness, inaccuracy, misrepresentation and calumny” Subsequently, in the same defensive article he says “Hassner thus formed his judgement of my book and then presented to the readers of the National Interest as a review of my book text and arguments he had formulated before he had read the book” Further on he defends himself by saying “Having pre-formed his opinion of The Clash, it is not surprising that Hassner’s review is replete with factual inaccuracies. His errors are not limited to his comments on this book. He also discusses some of my previous writings, as he did in his 1995 paper, and he is no more accurate about them than he is about The Clash” (19) Huntington, in criticising Hassner’s review of his book, exhibits on one hand his scholarly acumen and on the other, his fierce exasperation at being challenged.
Over a year later Huntington reaffirms his beliefs in primacy of culture by stating “The twentieth century was the century of ideology, of the competition of socialism, communism, liberalism, authoritarianism, fascism, democracy. Now, while we have not had the end of history, we have arrived, at least for the moment, at the end of ideology. The twenty-first century is at least beginning as the century of culture, with the differences, interactions, and conflicts among cultures taking center stage. This has become manifest, among other ways, in the extent to which scholars, politicians, economic development officials, soldiers, and strategists are all turning to culture as a central factor in explaining human social, political, and economic behavior. In short, culture counts, with consequences for both good and evil.” (20) He tries to once again establish his civilisational category thus “First, culture may refer to the products of a society. People speak of a society’s high culture—the art, literature, music—and its popular or folk culture. Second, anthropologists speak of culture in a much broader sense to mean the entire way of life of a society, its institutions, social structure, family structure, and the meanings people attribute to these. Finally, other scholars, perhaps particularly political scientists, see culture as something subjective, meaning the beliefs, values, attitudes, orientations, assumptions, philosophy, Weltanschauung of a particular group of people. However it is defined, villages, clans, regions, nations, and, at the broadest level, civilizations, have distinct cultures. Civilizations are the broadest cultural entities with which people identify. At present, as I argued in my book, there are about eight major civilizations or cultural zones in the world. Obviously, each of these has within it innumerable subcultures.” (21)

He reaffirms many of his original ideas by stating “Yet as modernization proceeds, the tendency is for people to return to their indigenous cultures, as is witnessed today in the resurgence of Islam, the celebration of Asian values, and the revival of religion in so many parts of the world. The world is modernizing, but it is not Westernizing in any truly meaningful sense.” (22)
He goes on to restate "One, the most important groupings of states are no longer the three blocs of the Cold War but rather the world's seven or eight major civilizations: Western, Orthodox, Chinese, Japanese, Muslim, Hindu, Latin American, and African. Henry Kissinger has argued that the "international system of the twenty-first century ... will contain at least six major powers—the United States, Europe, China, Japan, Russia, and probably India." Kissinger's six major powers belong to and are the leading or core states of five very different civilizations, and, in addition, there are important Islamic states whose strategic locations, large populations, and/or oil resources make them influential in world affairs. The rivalry of the superpowers is being supplanted by the clash of civilizations. For the first time in history, global politics is both multipolar and multicivilizational." (23)

He also reaffirms his original ideas spelt out in his thesis "Second, changes are occurring in the relative power of civilizations and their core states. The West has been the overwhelmingly dominant civilization for centuries, and it will remain so well into the next century. Nonetheless major forces are at work producing changes in relative power. These include the demographic stagnation and economic slowdown of the West, on the one hand, and the economic growth of East Asian societies and the demographic dynamism of Islamic societies on the other." (24) Huntington literally repeats all his original tenets "In this new world, the relations between states from different civilizations will normally be distant and cool and often highly antagonistic. While ad hoc coalitions may exist at times across civilization boundaries, intercivilizational relations are more likely to be described by such terms as competitive coexistence, cold war, and cold peace." (25) He recaps "In this new world, the most dangerous form of violent conflict would be core state wars between the major states of different civilizations. The principal sources of these two forms of conflict and hence of political instability during the next quarter century will be the resurgence of Islam and the rise of China. The relations of the West with these challenger civilizations -- Islam and
China -- are likely to be particularly difficult and antagonistic. The potentially most dangerous conflict is that between the United States and China." (26)

He confidently states "My original article on the clash of civilizations was published five years ago, and the book came out two years ago. Recent developments demonstrate, I believe, the validity and relevance of this cultural-civilizational approach to world politics. These include: the continuation, punctuated at times by brief truces, of violent local fault-line wars between groups from different civilizations in many parts of the world; the restructuring of European politics along civilizational lines; the dramatic progress toward economic integration of single-civilization entities like the European Union and Mercosur and the lack of progress in multicivilization efforts like APEC and NAFTA; the challenges to secular concepts of legitimacy and identity by religious political movements in India, Israel, Turkey, and other countries; the increasing cooperation among Muslim societies in dealing with non-Muslim countries; the on-going conflicts over non-Western immigration into Europe and North America; the continuing rise of China as a power in world affairs and the intensification of the "Confucian-Muslim connection" between China, Iran, and Pakistan; the disintegration of the 1990-91 anti-Iraq coalition; the fading prospects that Russia will join the Western community of nations; the gradual emergence of the core states of South Africa and Nigeria in Africa and Brazil in Latin America; and, most dramatically, nuclear proliferation and deproliferation. The restructuring of international politics along civilizational lines has become particularly evident in Central and Eastern Europe. For forty-five years, the political dividing line in Europe was the Iron Curtain. Now that line has moved several hundred miles east and is the line separating the peoples of Western Christianity, on the one hand, from Muslim and Orthodox peoples on the other. Austria, Sweden, and Finland, countries culturally part of the West, had to be neutral and separated from the West in the Cold War. Now they have joined their cultural kin in the European Union. Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic are joining NATO and moving
towards E.U. membership as well. In the Baltics, the former captive republics are now able to escape the Russian grasp and align themselves with their cultural kin to the West.” (27) Huntington trumpets “India and Pakistan carried forward their intercivilizational rivalry by conducting their nuclear tests. The clash of civilizations is alive and well in world politics.” (28)

Huntington says “People often criticize my argument on the grounds that it is a self-fulfilling prophecy, that somehow because I say that clashes between civilizations exist and may intensify that I am arguing they should occur. That, however, is clearly not the case, and no prophecy is in itself either self-fulfilling or non-self-fulfilling. It depends on how people react to it.” (29) But people can be made to react in a desired manner by use of various propaganda tactics and media

Huntington’s argument is that “In the 1950s and 1960s, many well-informed experts said that nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union was virtually inevitable. That war did not occur because people took these warnings seriously and developed arms control programs, hotlines, mutual understandings, rules of conduct, that reduced its likelihood. I am delighted that since I first warned of the dangers from clashes of civilizations, many people have become concerned about the need to prevent and contain such clashes. Political leaders, including the presidents of Germany, the Czech Republic, and Iran have explicitly called for a dialogue of civilizations. As a result of Iranian initiative, the United Nations has designated the year 2001 as the year for a dialogue of civilizations. And in my own modest effort, I have organized conferences and seminars at Harvard involving people from different civilizations to explore how to overcome their differences and expand their commonalities.” (30) And this argument does have merit but that does not in any way mean that an agenda is not put at work. It does not mean that a deliberate new framework is being crafted out or pursued for the purpose of the dominance of the existing hegemons and maintaining a status quo ante. In short, Huntington’s keynote address explains his
original contentions in a nutshell in an attempt to re-emphasise his thesis and is more of an exercise in defending his position that any advancement in his position.

Huntington has been interviewed scores of times and whenever he has traveled he has spoken to journalists expressing his views about his thesis. Most of his interviews were focused on his ‘Clash’ thesis and throughout the later half of the 1990s his views on his thesis had been extremely firm and categorical. A sampling of interviews is considered to highlight his persistent affirmative stand on ‘The Clash’ thesis.

To a question by David Gergen asking why he believes that in the 21st century clashes will be between or among civilizations, Huntington replied “Because the world has evolved and, in particular, western civilization has evolved, and those clashes that you mentioned were all within western civilization. Civilizations evolve over time, and most scholars of civilization, including people like Carol Quigley, argue that they go through periods of warring states, and eventually evolve into a universal state. The West hasn't reached its universal state as yet, although its close to it, but it certainly has evolved out of its warring state phase, which it was in for a couple of centuries.” (31) Here Huntington makes it very clear that intercivilisational clash is inevitable. He continues to reaffirm many of his ideas spelt out in his book and says “the overall western power is gradually fading. It will take a long time, and certainly the West will remain the dominant civilization well into the next century, but the decline is occurring”. He also reaffirms his belief in the seven civilizations by saying “Well, I think the most important ones are orthodox civilization with Russia as a core state, Islamic civilization which stretches from Morocco to Indonesia, and which lacks a core state, but there are several active states within Islam clearly. China--Chinese civilization--Japan, which is really a civilization all unto itself; Hindu civilization, where India, of course, is a preeminent power; Latin America, that I would classify as a separate civilization, although some people wouldn't; and Africa,
which is, again, a very disorganized collection of countries which have yet to cohere into any sort of real consciousness but may well do so in the coming decades under the leadership of South Africa.” (32)

He also clings to his original ideas about Islam by saying “And then there's a question of Islam where the challenge is somewhat different because it stems primarily from the demographic dynamism of Islam, the very high birth rates that have existed in most Muslim countries, and the fact that this has generated an immense youth bulge in most Muslim countries, where the proportion of the population between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five exceeds 20 percent of the total. And when that happens, sociologists and historians have pointed out, there's usually trouble of some sort. And this is the reason for both the trouble within Islam and for the troubles between Muslims and their neighbors in large part, including what has happened in Yugoslavia.” (33) Further he reaffirms “And so I think American foreign policy clearly has to focus on the intercivilizational conflicts that will challenge us, and we also have to keep our guard up and I think try to reinvigorate relations with our European allies, which I think this administration has rather neglected.” (34) He also reaffirms his fear of the Confucian threat to the West by saying “Well, I think the worst thing would be for us to stumble into a great war without realizing it, without being the--without being prepared for it. I think it makes sense to try to contain China and limit the expansion of Chinese influence in other Asian countries. The great problem there is we have to have the cooperation of those other Asian countries. It was one thing to contain the Soviet Union in Europe because Britain, France, and Germany were all willing to join in. But will Japan and other Asian countries be willing to join in the containment of China? I'm rather dubious” (35)

When asked by NPQ whether the clash of civilizations has finally come to blows with the recent (May 1998) nuclear Tests (by India and Pakistan)
Huntington replied "The nuclear tests in South Asia certainly confirm the thesis that the clash between civilization - in this case Islam and Hinduism - has replaced the ideological confrontation of the Cold War as the main characteristic of conflict in today's world. Obviously, India and Pakistan represent different civilizations. They have had three wars in the last 50 years. The paradox of the situation is that now that both nations have carried out their nuclear tests, the danger of war may have decreased" (36) The last statement defeats Huntington's assertion that it is a clash of civilization and actually points to the ideological and political reality of balance of power, so characteristic of the era of Cold War.

In 2000 Huntington was still upbeat and proud about his thesis and said "Some of the commentators thought my argument was brilliant and original, but they were few, very few. The most enthusiastic of them was former President Nixon, to whom Chris sent a copy of my lecture, and who thought it was absolutely terrific, but he didn't have much company. A few other commentators thought my argument was brilliant but not original and sent me lengthy manuscripts in which they said they expressed the same ideas long before I did. Most commentators, however, found my argument wrong, wrong-headed, and dangerous. Five years later, however, I feel vindicated: newspaper headlines almost every day indicate that my thesis on the centrality of culture in today's world is in large part right on target. Cultural identities, preferences, differences, and similarities are in considerable measure shaping post-Cold War global politics. Also during these five years there have been multiplying expressions by political leaders from the President of Germany to the President of Iran about the need for a dialogue of civilizations, for which I think I deserve some small credit by frightening people as to the dangers of clashes of civilizations." (37) Huntington's defence is thus gets laced with self approbation and self-pride.
6.3 Post 9/11 Period

The 9/11 attacks brought back 'The Clash' thesis to the centre stage. And this also led to renewed flood of criticisms, much more biting and acerbic then earlier, given the dangerous new developments. Huntington in reply, propagated his idea of clash of civilizations ever more ferociously and vociferously in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 attacks and has mostly continued to defend his thesis throughout five years since. He now adopts a different strategy of trying to pin the blame on Bin Laden for initiating a clash. "Clearly, Osama bin Laden wants it to be a clash of civilisations between Islam and the West. The first priority for our government is to try to prevent it from becoming one. But there is a danger it could move in that direction. The administration has acted exactly the right way in attempting to rally support among Muslim governments. But there are pressures here in the US to attack other terrorist groups and states that support terrorist groups. And that, it seems to me, could broaden it into a clash of civilisations. (38)

At this instance he defended himself against the criticism that he has monolithic view of civilizations. "The major section on Islam in my book is called 'Consciousness Without Cohesion', in which I talk about all the divisions in the Islamic world, about Muslim-on-Muslim fighting. Even in the current crisis, they are still divided. You have a billion people, with all these sub-cultures, the tribes. Islam is less unified than any other civilisation.. Now what you see is the different Islamic groups competing with each other". (39) Thus, instead of fiercely defending his earlier almost rigid position Huntington indicates a climb-down.

During the occasion of publication ceremony of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in January 2002 when many journalists had gathered at Florida, a two-day seminar was held where Samuel Huntington spoke his mind once again during a conversation moderated by Michael Cromartie. On this occasion the Discussion Participants with Samuel P. Huntington and Michael Cromartie, of

In this immediate aftermath of 9/11, Huntington again reaffirms his original views before the august gathering “The big changes in global politics occurred not four months ago but ten years ago, with the collapse of the Soviet Union. That was when many of the central trends evident in global politics today materialized. September 11 has affected those trends to a significant but not overwhelming degree. Four major changes have occurred in global politics over the course of the past decade. The first is the extent to which culture has replaced ideology as a source of identity, changing the affiliations and antagonisms in world affairs. This is the main theme of my book *The Clash of Civilizations*, and I think it is a tremendously significant development. What my friend Frank Fukuyama was really talking about in his book *The End of History* is the end of ideology as a significant factor in world politics. (He couldn’t use that title because Daniel Bell had written a book called *The End of Ideology* thirty years before.) The century of ideology, the twentieth century, is over, and it seems to me that culture, cultural identity, ethnic, linguistic, traditional, and religious identity—these things now play central roles in global politics.” (40) In the discussion he states that “It seems to me that the cultural/religious element is overwhelmingly preponderant. After all, Osama Bin Laden and likeminded people have denounced
Western civilization. Sure, they denounced particular aspects of that civilization, claiming that we are corrupt, decadent, and so on. But I don’t see much in the way of ideological content there, if you are thinking of ideology in political terms. I may be missing something, but militant Islam doesn’t seem to have much in the way of a political ideology. It certainly does have a religious commitment.” (41)

He goes on to state “The second major change is that in the past decade or so there has been a tremendous resurgence of religion in societies all over the world. During the twentieth century, a secular century, Lenin, Attaturk, Nehru, Ben Gurion, and the Shah all defined the identity of their countries in the secular century’s modern terms. That has changed. The Shah is gone. The Soviet Union is gone, and in its place is a Russia that in public statements identifies itself quite explicitly with Russian Orthodoxy. In Turkey, India, and Israel, major political movements are challenging the secular definition of national identity. Politicians in many societies have found that religion either is crucial to maintaining their legitimacy as rulers or must be suppressed because it presents a challenge to that legitimacy. The third large change in the world situation followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. During the Cold War we had a clear bipolar situation: two superpowers, two rivals. What do we have now? Political scientists debate whether we have a unipolar or a multipolar situation. I think we can best describe the existing structure of global power as uni-multi-polar: one superpower, then six or eight major regional powers, then secondary regional powers, and then the rest. The structure of global power is pyramid-shaped, with the single superpower at the top. The fourth significant change in global politics since the Cold War concerns the nature of international conflict. One rather striking thing over the past several decades has been the relative scarcity of interstate wars.” (42)

He forcefully says “Nowhere has religion become more important in shaping identity than in the world of Islam, and the Islamic resurgence is a major development in our world” (43) He reiterates his original idea of ‘Islamic
Resurgence' and believes that the civilisational war has become a reality. "This Islamic resurgence, does, unfortunately, include extremist and violent elements, as we saw so tragically on September 11. The reactions of different societies to that attack on America were very much along cultural, civilizational lines. Britain and a few other countries have stood with us enthusiastically, while most Europeans have been more restrained, more qualified in their support. As for the Muslim world, while the war in Afghanistan was going on, it seemed that in every Muslim society, the populace was overwhelmingly on the side of Al Qaeda and against the United States. This is something we're going to have to live with" (44) Huntington also clarifies that his thesis is about civilisational conflicts and not merely religious conflicts "Is religion by itself the core of the conflict? In some cases it undoubtedly is. But in general it seems to me that it's an added dimension." (45)

He also reasserts his stance about the Muslims "While groups from all religions have engaged in various forms of violence and terrorism, the figures make it clear that in the past decade Muslims have been involved in far more of these activities than people of other religions. One of the things that attracted a lot of attention in The Clash of Civilizations was my use of the phrase "the bloody borders of Islam." But if you look around the Muslim world you see that in the 1990s Muslims were fighting non-Muslims in Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Chechnya, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Kashmir, Indonesia, the Philippines, the Middle East, Sudan, Nigeria, and other places. Muslims have been fighting one another also. The International Institute for Strategic Studies surveyed the armed conflicts going on in the world in 2000, and its figures show that twenty-three of the thirty-two conflicts under way involved Muslims." (46)

In this conversation Huntington reaffirms all his beliefs and ideas given in his original thesis about modernisation, core states, and demographic change. He says "I think it is largely a response to unsuccessful modernization in most Muslim societies" and "I think a result of the division within Islam. Every other
major civilization has a core state. What is a core state for Muslims?" and finally "A demographic analysis in my book shows the proportion of the population in the 15-to-24 age group in various countries. Now there have been notable changes in some countries; in the Balkans, for instance, the proportion is going down significantly. But in other Muslim countries, including Saudi Arabia, the youth sector is expanding." (47)

He also defends against the criticism of his thesis and in the process indicates a shift in his otherwise well-known stand that Islam is incompatible with democracy. He says "Any great religion or culture has all sorts of diverse elements within it that can be capitalized on for a variety of purposes. Now people make the argument that Islam is incompatible with democracy or that Confucian culture is incompatible with democracy. I argue in my book that I don't see any inherent conflict between Islamic culture and democracy. There is the problem that in an Islamic state there is only one community and it is both political and religious; hence you can't have our ideal of separation of church and state. But it seems to me that there are ways of accommodating that within a democratic political system. If you look at the basic assumptions of the culture, Confucianism may be more incompatible with democracy, but again, I think that is something that can be dealt with. I don't see that any particular culture is entirely incompatible with democracy—not necessarily Western, liberal democracy but democracy of some sort." (48) Thus there is an opportunistic departure from his earlier stated position which he now realises is very weak.

Huntington refers to Jenkins and says "I think that another manifestation of the connection between religion and international affairs is the competition between Islam and Christianity, historically the two great missionary religions. They are both out working the world trying to make converts. This competition is particularly acute in Africa, where Muslims have influence in the north and Christians in the south. I just got an advance copy of a forthcoming book dealing
with the spread of Christianity in the world: *The Next Christendom*. The author, Philip Jenkins, makes the argument that there is a great spread of Christianity in the southern half of the world, and that the balance in the Catholic Church and in other denominations is shifting from the northern hemisphere to the southern hemisphere, particularly into Africa. This competition for converts is the religious dimension of the clash of civilizations." (49) Typically Huntington is back at using future projections to back up his argument about the future religious clash between Christianity and Islam.

In another conversation with Anthony Giddens of the London School of Economics Samuel Huntington again defends his thesis. He reasserts the same idea of core states and civilizations thus "The US, as a global superpower, has interests in every part of the world and it tends to promote those interests in every part of the world. On the other hand, what I call "major regional powers," such as the European Union, or Russia, or China, or India, or Brazil, have interests in their regions. They quite appropriately and understandably think that they ought to be able to shape what goes on on their turf. These differences in perspectives and interests inevitably, in many cases, lead to conflict." (50)

Huntington shifts his position slightly away from civilizations and more towards religion "One should note that there is a global resurgence of religion. This is taking place just about everywhere except, possibly, in Western Europe. Religion is becoming more and more important in the way in which countries define their national identity-in the way in which governments try to establish legitimacy-as well as an important element in communal conflicts" (51) He is thus playing up a more religious and communal thesis than a cultural and civilisational. But religion being intimately connected to culture and civilisations, though not necessarily or entirely , helps to maintain the link and prop up his original thesis.
In a sharp rebuff of ideas of ‘Two Wests’ put out by scholars like Robert Kagan and others, Huntington once again reiterates his original belief in a single Western civilization. He says “In any case, divisions have existed between America and Europe in the past, most notably in the 19th century, and the current differences are mild. I think it is important to emphasize the common historical and cultural legacy that joins America and Europe-going back through the centuries of the Renaissance Reformation, Enlightenment, development of the Westphalian system and nation states, but, even more important, a division between spiritual and temporal authority, the rule of law, social pluralism, representative government, individual rights...These, it seems to me, constitute the basic features of Western civilization. They distinguish Europeans and Americans from other societies and cultures whether they are Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Muslim, Arab or other.” (52)

He also reiterates his original belief in the “Islam’s bloody borders” by saying “The extent to which communal violence in today’s world involves Muslims is striking: The Economist identified 32 major conflicts going on in the world in the year 2000, and if you look at those 32 conflicts more than two-thirds involve Muslims fighting other Muslims or Muslims fighting non-Muslims”. (53)

Samuel Huntington, when interviewed by Mark O'Keefe, continued to speak about cultures. He said “Cultures evolve and change, but they almost always include large elements of tradition. So I started looking at the different cultures around the world — obviously, there are large numbers of cultures — but it seemed to me there may be eight or nine major cultures: Western, Orthodox, Hindu, Islamic, Sinic, Buddhist, Latin American, African and Japanese. I began looking at the world in those terms, and that led me to the clash of civilizations and the relations among peoples of different cultures” (54)
He also defends himself by saying "I certainly don't think I have ever argued that culture is the only thing that counts. But it is very important because it furnishes the basis for people starting to think about international relations and how people relate to each other. I think we all feel much more at home with people who have similar cultures, language and values than we do with other people. There are many cultures in the world, most of them involving a relatively small number of people. But there are, I argue, maybe eight or nine major cultures, so I focus my attention on those — how they developed, how they are interacting with each other now and to what extent cultural differences make a difference in the way states deal with one another" (55) Clearly this exhibits a dramatic shift, as he now tries to qualify cultures as multiple, small and big, major and so on. Gone is his conviction that there are only eight civilisations.

Huntington continues to struggle to defend the confusion about culture and religion that was seen in his thesis by saying "Religion is one component of a people's culture. There are other things, such as language that are centrally important, but religion is also vitally important because it provides the framework in which people look out at the world. Language enables them to communicate with the world. But religion provides the framework, in most cases" (56) Increasingly it is observed that Huntington in the process of defending himself is making sweeping changes to his original ideas, obviously with the intention of blunting the caustic and indefensible criticisms. The defence is certainly not going easy for him any more, especially with so many empirical studies debunking most of his contentions. But defend he must or else he is in danger of being discredited and his theory is in danger of being consigned to rubbish heap.

As regards the question of a full-fledged clash of civilizations in the post 9/11 period Huntington treads cautiously and replies "Not simply one clash, but clashes of civilizations certainly occur. And this doesn't mean, as I think I emphasized in what I wrote, that there are no clashes within civilizations; obviously there are. To a very large extent, most of the conflicts and wars are
between people within the same civilization.” (57) Another defence leading to another departure from the original monochromatic positions!

Huntington shows a clear change in his earlier idea about Islam as a monolithic entity when he says “You use the term "the Islamic world," but the Islamic world is highly divided — different varieties of Islam and different states. Inevitably, you end up having different types of relations with these different entities. We certainly haven't had a major, violent clash of civilizations. There have been lots of issues. Some of them have been dealt with more successfully than others. I guess I am reasonably satisfied with what has happened just because I can contemplate how it could have been so much worse.” (58) Evidently, Huntington has begun his journey downhill.

Huntington, of course continues to be hopeful that his thesis may still come true when he says “The development of major coalitions on each side, if the Muslim countries had come together effectively and attempted to reassert their control over broad sections of the West, which after all, they did control a thousand years ago when they controlled all of Spain and a good part of southern France. Conceivably, that might happen in the future, but it certainly hasn't happened yet” (59)

Gradually, Huntington tries to qualify his earlier sweeping statements and ideas. He now says “The argument in my book on the clash of civilization was well reflected in that short quote saying that the relations between countries in the coming decade are most likely to reflect their cultural commitments, their cultural ties and antagonism with other countries. Quite obviously power will continue to play a central role in global politics as it always does. But usually there is something else. So the question really is what will be the central focus of global politics in the coming decades and my argument is that cultural identities and cultural antagonisms and affiliations will play not the only role but a major role. Countries will cooperate with each other, and are more likely to cooperate with
each other when they share a common culture, as is most dramatically illustrated in the European Union. But other groupings of countries are emerging in East Asia and in South America. Basically, as I said, these politics will be oriented around, in large part, cultural similarities and cultural antagonism.” (60) He is at pain to find solutions to his self created problems. He is now becoming the proverbial drowning man trying to remain afloat by clinging to a straw! Huntington is clearly vacillating between the cultural-civilisational perspective and political-power perspective forcing a linkage between the two with the obvious intention of redeeming his position and thesis.

Huntington consistently denies that he ever suggested that civilizations or West or Islam are unified entities. He defends by saying that “I don’t say that the West is united, I don’t suggest that. Obviously there are divisions within the West and divisions within Islam — there are different sects, different communities, different countries. So neither one is homogenous at all. But they do have things in common. People everywhere talk about Islam and the West. Presumably that has some relationship to reality, that these are entities that have some meaning and they do. Of course the core of that reality is differences in religion.” (61) Huntington is at pains to explain that he has been misunderstood and misconstrued and that he never viewed civilisations in a monolithic perspective.

As a part of his defence Huntington is also at pains to highlight the complexity of global politics. He is clearly seen moving away from the starkly civilisational polar view he so strongly espoused and propagated in his original thesis. He says “but as I said, both sides are divided and Western countries collaborate with Muslim countries and vice versa. I think it’s a mistake, let me just repeat, to think in terms of two homogenous sides starkly confronting each other. Global politics remains extremely complex and countries have different interests, which will also lead them to make what might seem as rather bizarre friends and
allies. The U.S. has and still is cooperating with various military dictatorships around the world. Obviously we would prefer to see them democratized, but we are doing it because we have national interests, whether it's working with Pakistan on Afghanistan or whatever" (62) In course of his self defence Huntington, one by one, himself demolishes many of his most well articulated ideas and positions, almost rendering his thesis acutely diluted!

The year 2007 can be said to be a watershed as far as Huntington and his thesis is concerned. Recently, while defending himself, Huntington has apparently continued to water down his original thesis even more. This process actually began in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks when Huntington came under scathing attack by many for suggesting the very idea of civilizations as clashing. His most striking departure or shift is evident in his interview to the New Perspective Quarterly journal. At first, he begins by sayings "My view is that relations between countries in the coming decades are most likely to reflect their cultural commitments, their cultural ties and antagonism with other countries rather than other factors." (63) But then Huntington admits "Quite obviously, power will continue to play a central role in global politics, as it always does." Huntington, by conceding that power will be central, contradicts his own original hypothesis where he had said that culture and civilisation will be central. But again trying to salvage something, he goes on to say "But usually there is something else behind conflicts" and feebly reaffirms his belief "My argument remains that cultural identities, antagonisms and affiliations will not only play a role, but play a major role in relations between states". Suddenly Huntingtonian edifice seems to be founded on a shaky ground and in the danger of crumbling under its own weight!

He once again denies that he stood for a monolithic idea of civilizations. He says "I don’t suggest that the West is uniform. Obviously there are divisions within the West and divisions within Islam. There are different sects, different
communities, different countries. So neither Islam nor the West is homogenous at all. I don’t think it is all that useful to think in terms of two solid blocs.” But he is unable to totally abandon his thesis and so says “But there is still commonality within. People everywhere talk about Islam and the West. Presumably that has some relationship to reality and has some meaning. Of course, the core of that reality is differences in religion.” (64) Another important pillar of his construction is being shaken by him! He goes on to add “As I’ve said, both sides have divisions. Western countries collaborate with Muslim countries and vice versa. It’s a mistake, let me just repeat, to think in terms of two homogenous sides starkly confronting each other. Global politics remains extremely complex and countries have different interests, which will also lead them to make what might seem rather bizarre friends and allies. The United States has cooperated and still is cooperating with various military dictatorships around the world.” (65) Huntington comes a full circle from attempting to simplifying complex reality through his paradigm to accepting the fact that complexity cannot be so easily simplified or readily explained. A grave self-inflection and self-deflation indeed! Stringent criticisms and scathing accusations seem to have had an effect on Huntington’s thinking in 2007.

Huntington seems to casts doubts on his own earlier belief when he says “But I am doubtful that there will be any sort of real coherence of Muslim societies as a single political system run by an elected or non-elected group of leaders. But I think we can expect leaders of Muslim societies to cooperate with each other on many issues, just as Western societies cooperate with each other.” (66) The sting seems to have gone and sombre mood seems to have taken over.

Having vexed eloquent about clash of civilizations and threat of Islamic civilization Huntington in a seemingly radical departure says “I don’t know what the answer to that question is because I’m not an expert on Islam, but it is striking
the relative slowness with which Muslim countries, particularly Arab countries, have moved toward democracy. Their cultural heritage and their ideologies may be in part responsible.” (67) It is pertinent to note the ‘may be’ instead of a categorical affirmation which was present in his earlier utterings. And of course a self confessed ‘maverick’ and an amateur has finally admitted that he is not an expert to talk about Islam in such authoritative terms as he did in his 1993 article and the subsequent book! The pressure seems to be telling on Huntington. And given his advance and human psychology to salvage something in ones last days his predicament is quite understandable. Realisation, though belated, has or is coming to Huntington. His defence is therefore weakening but total abandonment is not possible. After all Huntington is human, full of human frailties and human failings. But when time and facts are not one’s side recapitulation does look a good idea.

Huntington has accepted the possibility that other possible factors such as US foreign policy, as suggested by realists like Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer may be responsible for conflicts. He states “I think it’s an argument that other people have to take seriously. They are not polemicists by any means.” (68) Here is an open, though grudging acceptance of the realist perspective as a better explanation! And this is not difficult for Huntington because, for one he has tried ‘toying’ with it earlier and second, he would like to keep up his image as a ‘realist conservative’.

However to Amartya Sen’s criticism of civilizational thesis, saying that “identity is not destiny” and that each individual can construct and reconstruct chosen identities and that the clash-of-civilizations theory causes a “miniaturization of human beings” leading to “unique and choiceless” identities that fit into “boxes of civilization.” Huntington disagrees. Defending himself he says “I think that statement by Amartya Sen is totally wrong. I never argued that,
and I realize that people have multiple identities. What I argue in my book, as I indicated earlier, is that the basis of association and antagonism among countries has changed over time. In the coming decades, questions of identity, meaning cultural heritage, language and religion, will play a central role in politics. I first elaborated this idea over 10 years ago, and much of what I said has been validated during that time." (69) Even here the denial is more about agreeing with Sen then disagreeing. Interestingly, not only is Huntington sounding mellowed down, but while defending his thesis refrains from using the term 'civilisation', thereby downplaying the main foundation of his original thesis that future relations and conflicts will stem from civilisational differences. A great departure indeed!

Huntington, moving away from his original contention that, Islam is radical and fundamentalist says "I think fundamentalism is what you said: this radical attitude toward one's own identity and civilization as compared to other people's identities and cultures. Fundamentalist tendencies and movements have existed in all societies and civilizations." (70) Attempting a correction he now extends fundamentalism to encompass all peoples and groups and not only to Islam. Again a great capitulation indeed!

Huntington, after scathing criticisms of his latest book, 'Who Are We?', also seemingly capitulates on the question of Hispanics in America and also with regard to the position of Muslims in Europe as compared to the position of Hispanics in the US, says "There are fundamental differences because the US has always been an immigrant country. The Hispanics who come here are largely from Mexico and South America. They are Catholics, but that is an American religion. One-third of our population is Catholic, so that does not have the same impact as Muslims coming into Europe. They speak Spanish or Portuguese, which are languages we are familiar with, so it doesn't seem to pose the same types of problems as Arabic-speaking Muslims do in Europe. The major difference for us
with respect to Hispanic immigration is that it is so large and it is coming from neighboring countries rather than those countries off the Atlantic or Pacific. That creates different issues and different problems for us as compared to the past. It is still very different, however, from the situation in Europe, where we see people with a very different non-European religion coming from neighboring countries.”

(71) Evidently Huntington is either attempting to square the circles, or is caught in a maze or is simply confused and stupefied, entrapped by his own creation. At this juncture it is extremely difficult to say.

6.4 Conclusion

Much of Huntington’s arrogance and faith in his original thesis expressed in his last two major works ‘Clash of Civilisations?’ and ‘Who Are We?’ seems to have been waning and dissipating by January 2007, largely because of derisive criticism by scholars and thinkers, but mostly because of the untenability and untruthfulness of his main thesis. His latest interviews indicate a shift in Huntington’s thinking but it is too premature to say that it is a real shift. One needs to wait for the confirmation of his changing stance evident in his interview with the New Perspective Quarterly at the beginning of 2007.