Chapter 9
VALIDITY OF HUNTINGTON’S THESIS

9.1 Testing Huntington’s Thesis: International Surveys

The impact of Huntington’s thesis has been felt since its formulation and many fears have been raised about the possibility of the theory being true and hence its implications to world peace and order. Therefore, many scholars felt the urgent need to empirically test the thesis. Consequently, many surveys and tests have been conducted throughout the world over past several years. In view of this the recently published UN Report stated that “the ‘Clash of Civilizations?’ article has produced ‘fruitful debates’ within the discipline of international relations. Then the discipline has witnessed several empirical studies about the thesis.” (1) Some of these studies have been by, Weede 1998, Midlarsky 1998, Henderson and Tuckers 1999, Gurr 2000; Russett, O’Neal and Cox 2000; Fox 2001; Chirot 2001; Henderson and Tucker 2001; Fox 2001, Chiozza 2002, Norris and Inglehart 2002, Tusicisny 2004, Henderson 2005, Imai 2005, Galloway 2006, Charron 2006, Lai 2006 and others. And most of these including the latest ones have been analysed in this study.

In an empirical study carried out in 1998 by Midlarsky to test the extent to which democracy and Islam are mutually exclusive and to what extent it has implications for civilizational conflict and the democratic peace, it was again found out that the possibility of a civilisational war among nation-states was extremely low. The study used three measures of democracy, namely: a political rights index, an index of liberal democracy, and a measure based on institutionalization to test the validity of Huntington’s propositions. The study found that the environmental variables, which include sea borders and rainfall that minimize external threat to democratic systems could better predict conflict than
the more rudimentary political rights index. The study also found that cultural variables, including Islam were in a negative direction, and were found to be more clearly associated with liberal democracy. Between these two extremes the measure of democratic institutionalization was found to be functioning in a balancing manner. The study concluded that the possibility of wars between democratic countries depended on the specific index of democracy employed. The most important finding of this study was that there was absence of a significant negative association between Islam and the political rights index and therefore it could not be justified that Islam was incompatible with democracy and hence there was a very low probability of clash between the West and Islam. (2) This study has also been considered by the UN Report which says "Manus Midlarsky's empirical study has also produced a similar conclusion that there is no negative association between Islam and democracy, which Huntington assumes to lead civilizational conflict" (3)

Another noteworthy empirical study to test Huntington's thesis has been carried out by Bruce M. Russett, John R. Oneal and Michaelene Cox in 2001. According to this study cultural and civilisational matters are less important than power, geography, alliances, economics, etc in causing conflicts and wars in the world. In analysing the extent to which propositions from Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* can account for the incidence of militarized interstate disputes between countries during the period 1950-92 the study found that the traditional realist influences as contiguity, alliances, and relative power, and liberal influences of joint democracy and interdependence, provided a better explanation for rise of interstate conflict. According to this study pairs of states split across civilizational boundaries are not at all likely to become engaged in disputes than other kinds of states. The study found that the disputes between the West and the rest of the world, or with Islam, were similar to those between or within most other groups and occurred at almost
the same frequency. The powerful core states in a civilization whether democratic or not, were found to have little control over conflicts occurring within their civilizations The study also inferred that when the liberal and realist influences were of the same level there was less likelihood of interstate conflict among the Western states as compared to the states in other civilisations. The likelihood of wars between two countries within other civilisations and among nations of different civilisations was more likely according to this study. One of the most noteworthy finding of this study was that instead of increase in disputes based on civilisational differences as predicted by Huntington’s clash of civilizations thesis, actually there was a marked decrease in military conflicts among states spread over different civilisations. The study actually concludes that with the receding of the Cold War rivalries and conflicts among neighbourly states of differing civilisations has actually gone down. Another important finding of this study has been that contrary to Huntington’s prediction, civilizations seem to have an important indirect influence on conflict among the warring states and the realist or liberal viewpoint seems to play a greater role than a civilisational one. The study has concluded that the role played by civilizations in international relations is not so significant as Huntington would want everyone to believe. The damning conclusion of this study is that there is little evidence that civilisations define the fault lines along which international conflicts could occur in the future. At the most the study says that Huntington’s thesis may help to predict the type of alliance that could emerge in a conflict scenario. (4) Even the UN Report on Alliance of Civilisations which considered this study has said “Bruce Russett, John Oneal and Michaelene Cox have looked for the significance of cultural/civilizational variables in causing international conflict. Their study is based on University of Michigan’s Correlates of War Project, which keeps data of all militarized inter-state disputes from 1885 to 1994. They have finally found that realist and liberal variables of conflict (realist variables-geography, power, alliances and liberal variables-democracy, economic interdependence and
international organizations) not civilizations matter most in international conflict and cooperation” (5)

Henderson and Tucker (2001) had analyzed the historical evidence to check if the probability of conflicts rises with cultural differences. They had studied the impact of cultural differences on the likelihood of international conflicts during the post-Cold War period by using controls for distance between the countries, the presence of democracy, and an index of power capabilities and came to the conclusion cultural differences hardly had any discernible impact on the possibility of the rise of conflict. Their study provided no evidence to suggest that the clash of civilizations was probable. Errol A. Henderson of the Pennsylvania State University State College again attempted to test Huntington’s thesis and presented a paper titled ‘Mistaken Identity: Testing the Clash of Civilizations Thesis in Light of Democratic Peace Claims’. (6) His study was focused on the ‘clashing’ in the context cultural identity becoming prominent in studies of world politics in the post Cold War era. He takes up from the studies of Russet (2000) and Henderson and Tucker (2001) who had tested and found democratic peace claims was more likely then conflicts. However as some other studies has questioned the empirical accuracy of the democratic peace thesis in the post Cold War era especially in the context of the relative salience of democratic peace and clash of civilizations claims, Henderson had decided to determine the accuracy of these two prominent theses on culture in world politics and using multivariate logistic regression analyses he came to the conclusion that there was neither support for the democratic peace nor clash of civilizations claims. The main conclusion of his study was that neither of these two theses on the role of culture in world politics was empirically substantiated.

One of the most detailed study to test Huntington’s thesis was undertaken by Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart in 2002. Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart
(7) in a field based research work, tested the validity of Huntington's thesis. In an 
article, 'The True Clash of Civilizations' Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart have 
discussed the results of their study based on surveys of opinions in Muslim 
majority countries and have concluded that there is no real rift between 
civilizations but there are differences in attitudes, especially towards sexuality and 
gender equality. Those societies that do not tolerate self-expression, they say, 
become unstable democracies and lead to conflict situations.

The study by Inglehart and Norris focused on the three main claims of 
Huntington, namely that the societal values in contemporary societies are rooted in 
religious cultures; that the most important cultural division between the Western 
and Islamic world concern differences over democratic values; and, that in the 
post-Cold War era, the 'culture clash' is the primary cause of much international 
and domestic ethnic conflict. This study was carried out across all the nine 
civilizational countries suggested in Huntington's thesis and is based on survey of 
public opinion in more than seventy societies during the period 1995 to 2001.

Based on the evidence collected by this very extensive study, four main 
findings were noted. Firstly, it was found that there is minimal difference between 
the Muslim world and the West as regards political attitudes such as evaluations of 
how well democracy works in practice, support for democratic ideals, and 
disapproval of strong leaders. Secondly it was observed that the East European 
countries like Russia, Ukraine and Moldova, who had adopted democracy model 
in the post Cold War period showed least support for democracy, than both 
Western and Islamic nations who were much more positive in their attitudes to 
democracy. Thirdly, the Islamic societies and many other non-Western societies 
such as Latin American and sub-Saharan showed greater support for religious 
authorities as compared to the West. This was a difference more between the West 
and the rest. But the greatest difference was noticed in case of social beliefs,
particularly on gender equality and sexual liberalization. It was found that the West believed much more in equality and liberty of gender than all other societies, particularly Islamic nations. It also showed that this gap has steadily widened as the younger generation in the West has gradually become more liberal in their sexual attitudes and behaviours while the younger generation in Islamic societies remained conservative and extremely traditional.

Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart have put it thus: "The study confirms the first claim in Huntington's thesis: culture does matter, and matter a lot, so that religious legacies leave their distinct imprint on contemporary values. But Huntington is essentially mistaken in assuming that the core 'clash' between the West and Islamic societies concerns political values: instead the evidence suggests that strikingly similar attitudes towards democracy are found in the West and the Islamic world. Where there are significant cross-cultural differences concerning the role of religious leaders, these attitudes divide the West from many other countries around the globe, not just Islamic nations. Moreover the original thesis erroneously assumed that the primary cultural fault line between the West and Islam concerns government, overlooking the stronger cultural divide that does exist, around the issues of gender equality and sexual liberalization. Cohort analysis suggests that as younger generations in the West have gradually become more liberal on these issues, this has generated a growing cultural gap, with Islamic nations remaining the most traditional societies around the world. The central values separating Islam and the West revolve far more centrally around Eros than Demos." (8)

Thus the clear conclusion of the study was that modern Western societies were evidently different, especially with regard to attitudes and behaviour associated with sexual and equality for women was much more in the Western societies. But at the same time, the study also concluded that political values held
by Western and Islamic societies were not fundamentally different so as to cause a clash of civilizations. The study results showed that both Islamic and Western societies are similar in their adherence to democratic ideals and so any claim, such as a clash of civilizations looked an extreme over-simplification. Having examined various political dimensions the study concluded that while Islamic societies did differ significantly from the West with regard to support for the religious authorities, they were far from exceptional. Therefore, the study held that any simplistic 'Islam versus the West' interpretation of any 'culture clash' as conveyed by the proponents of the theory and popular media is far too black-and-white. In short this very detailed empirical study questioned the very fundamentals of Huntington's thesis and seriously doubted the validity of the 'Clash of Civilisations' thesis.

The UN Report on Alliance of Civilisations says "Of these empirical studies, Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart's study is especially remarkable. They have compared political and social values of the Western and Muslim societies by using World Values Survey database. Norris and Inglehart, 'surprisingly', have found that Muslims have no less democratic ideals than the West and 'the West is not distinctive to Islam in its faith in democracy'. (9) In this respect, their study has considerably falsified Huntington's assumption that Islam and the West have fundamentally different political values based upon predominant religious cultures. The study demonstrates the existence of similar political attitudes in the Muslim World and the West. " (10)

Henderson again conducted another study subsequently to further test the clash of civilisations thesis. He took this challenge on account of Huntington's challenge to apply his thesis to armed conflicts within the states in the post Cold War period. Through the analysis of more recent data on intrastate armed conflicts, Henderson once again found that Huntington's thesis is not substantiated.
His conclusion was that many of the interethnic and inter-religious conflicts occurring in the post-Cold War period are clashes within rather than between civilizations. He actually observed that in the post-Cold War period actually the incidence of 'clashes of civilizations' declined, though marginally. (11)

Jonathan Fox in his article ‘State Failure and the Clash of Civilisations: An Examination of the Magnitude and Extent of Domestic Civilisational Conflict from 1950 to 1996 (12) has stated that his survey has found that there is no particular increase in the frequency of intercivilizational conflicts in the post-Cold War period. In this study Fox quantitatively examined Samuel Huntington’s 'clash of civilisations' thesis using data from the State Failure dataset which focuses on intense and violent internal conflicts between 1950 and 1996. It has been found that the proportion of state failures which are civilisational has remained mostly constant since 1965. His study found that the absolute amount of civilisational conflict has dropped considerably in the post Cold War era. He has concluded that there is no clear evidence to show that the overall intensity of civilisational state failures is increasing in proportion to non-civilisational state failures. In his study he also points out that the predictions of Islam's 'bloody borders' and the Confucian/Sinic-Islamic alliance against the West have not yet been realised. He says that, it is the Islamic groups which mostly clash with other Islamic groups, thus indicating an intracivilisational conflict more than inter-civilisational conflict. But he also has found that, the majority of the West's civilisational conflicts, during the Cold War period and to a lesser extent during the post Cold War era, are with the Islamic civilisation. He concludes that Huntington's prediction that the Islamic civilisation is a potential threat to the West is probably more due to the end of the relevance of the Cold War paradigm than any post-Cold War changes in the nature of conflict on account of civilisational differences. He highlights the potential influence of paradigms on policy and says that it should serve as a caution to academics and policy makers to be more aware of the assumptions they
make based on any paradigm. The study by Fox has thus provided evidence that Huntington's civilisational clash is more of myth than a reality.

Fox further seeks to test Samuel Huntington's argument that, the extent of both international and domestic conflict between 'civilizations' will see an increase in the post Cold War period, particularly between the Western and Islamic civilizations. He uses the Minorities at Risk dataset, in conjunction with independently collected variables, to test Huntington's propositions about future conflict, and in particular the 'fault line' wars within states. He analyses the data from three perspectives: the globally perspective, the perspective of the Islamic civilization, and from the perspective of the Western civilization. His finding is that at a global level there is hardly any change in the ratio and number of civilizational versus non-civilizational ethnic conflict since the end of the Cold War. But finds that there has been a little change in Islamic involvement in civilizational ethnic conflict in the post Cold War period. But the finding from a Western perspective is quite different. His study finds that the proportion of civilizational conflicts involving Western groups which are with Islamic groups has increased quite dramatically in the post Cold War era. Hence, the results of this study show that in case of a very narrow focus on the Western civilization, there seems to be increase in conflicts. This he says to some extent supports Huntington's claims about Islam as being more involved in civilisational type conflicts. But the study does not find any general increase in civilizational conflict at the broader level. Also his results do not show an increase in such conflicts in the post Cold War era as Huntington had hypothesized. Further countering Huntington's thesis the data analysed by Fox shows that Islam versus West conflicts are a minority of civilization conflicts and conflicts between different civilisations are far few or minority of all ethnic conflicts Hence the study by Fox also does not much support or validate Huntington's thesis that there is a clash of civilisations. (13)
In yet another attempt Jonathan Fox using Minorities at Risk dataset analysed the available data to see whether there has been a rise in both the quantity and intensity of ethnic conflicts between groups belonging to different civilizations in the post Cold War period. His analysis has shown that there are several problems with Huntington's argument. His finding is that civilizational conflicts constitute a minority of ethnic conflicts and that conflicts between the West and both the Sinic/Confucian and Islamic civilizations, also constitute a small minority of civilizational conflicts. His main finding here is that there is no statistically significant evidence to show that the intensity of civilizational ethnic conflicts have risen relative to other types of ethnic conflicts since the end of the Cold War. (14)

Giacomo Chiozza seeks to test Huntington's hypotheses, by using a logic specification with King & Zeng's solution for rareness of events on the Kosimo data. His study shows that interactions between states across the civilizational divide are not more conflict prone and he says that from 1990 to 1997 there have been hardly any civilisational wars and so Huntington's thesis he says is not validated. (15)

Niall Ferguson has also indicated that Huntington's theory does not hold much water in view of actual statistics. He says "Now Huntington is too clever a man not to hedge his bets." This article does not argue," he wrote back in 1993, "that groups within a civilisation will not conflict with and even fight one another." But he went on to reassert that "conflicts between groups in different civilisations will be more frequent, more sustained and more violent than conflicts between groups in the same civilisation." Sorry, wrong. It is well known that the overwhelming majority of conflicts since the end of the Cold War have been civil wars. The interesting thing is that only a minority of them have conformed to Huntington's model of inter-civilisation wars. More often than not, the wars of the
New World Disorder have been fought between ethnic groups within one of Huntington's civilisations. To be precise: Of 30 major armed conflicts that are either still going on or have recently ended, only 10 or 11 can be regarded as being in any sense between civilisations, in the sense that one side was predominantly Muslim and the other non-Muslim. But 14 were essentially ethnic conflicts, the worst being the wars that continue to bedevil Central Africa. Moreover, many of those conflicts that have a religious dimension are also ethnic conflicts; religious affiliation has more to do with the localised success of missionaries in the past than with long-standing membership of a Christian or Muslim civilisation.” (16)

In an essay “Civilizational Conflicts: More Frequent, Longer, and Bloodier?”, Andrej Tusicisny used a statistical method to analyze modern conflicts and found that “The relationship between civilizational difference and duration of conflict is not statistically significant,” He found that though Muslims were antagonist in a majority of post-Cold War intercivilizational conflicts, they did not involve much conflicts with the Western Christianity. On account of the highest number of geographic borders with other civilizational nations, the study concluded it was natural to find Muslim countries involved in a greater number of conflicts involving multiple civilizations. (17)

Nicholas Charron, stating that Huntington’s thesis having drawn a significant amount of critical attention from conflict scholars through quantitative tests by Henderson and Tuckers (1999) and Russet et al (2000) which found little or no empirical support for Huntington’s thesis, he claims that there really has been no comprehensive statistical testing of Huntington’s thesis during the post Cold War era due limitation of data. He therefore tries to use the up-dated data from the International Correlates of War Project (ICOW), to do a more comprehensive, quantitative test of Huntington’s thesis. (18) In trying to improve upon previous studies he takes the data for the long period 1989 to 2001 and using
both militarized interstate disputes as well as international wars as dependent variables in the study attempts to draw out conclusions. He claims that his analysis makes three significant improvements upon the previous empirical studies—considers much longer time duration 1989 to 2001, focuses exclusively on interstate wars and acknowledges Huntington’s attention to civilizational “fault line” by constructing an interaction term between contiguity and an indicator of a split-civilizational dyad. His different approach at testing Huntington’s thesis he claims has resulted in significantly different findings and conclusions as compared to the previous studies. His conclusion is that Huntington’s thesis receives strong empirical support when considering only violent international conflict in the post-Cold War period. However despite of a somewhat different result, Charron’s study does not sufficiently prove that Huntington’s clash of the civilizations thesis is true.

Kunihiko Imai also attempted an empirical test of Samuel Huntington’s Clash of Civilizations thesis. He first presented his findings in a paper presented at the annual meeting of the The Midwest Political Science Association, Palmer House Hilton, Chicago (19) and later published his findings in an article in the International Journal on World Peace. (20) His study attempts to test Huntington’s thesis in the light of globalisation sweeping the world. He tries to analyze Huntington’s claim of civilizational uniqueness by examining how two of the civilizations, Confucian or Islamic react to the challenge of globalisation. Though empirical studies he wanted to find out if states from these two civilizations would react differently towards the increased globalisation of their economies as compared to states from other civilizations. According to Imai exclusively focusing on, and only depending on the data from the past militarized interstate disputes may not be a right way to test Huntington’s thesis. He begins with the belief that if Huntington were right, than it would first show the validity of his thesis where civilizational boundaries split and that its manifestation would be visible in subtle ways than in outright military conflicts between states.
His main assumption is that since the end of the Cold War, the world has witnessed rapid changes, both in the nature, and the structure of the international system. His next assumption is that in this changing scenario states from different civilizations may act differently as compared to before. His belief was that if the states from different civilisations react differently globalization of their national economies or democratization, than it may help validating the Clash of Civilizations thesis. His study also tries to examine whether Confucian or Islamic states react differently from all other states to the increased integration of their economy in the globalised world by resisting the democratization of their societies as compared to other states.

Brian Lai of the University of Iowa has examined the influence of religion on conflict in the Middle East. He developed a refined approach to studying the effects of religion by examining intra-Islamic differences as well as the effects of domestic politics and religion on conflict. Lai attempts to tests Huntington's thesis in the context of Middle Eastern dyads from 1950 to 1992. His finding is that religious identity does matter but only when its relationship with conflict is more clearly specified. He also found that the religious differences between the leaders, and not religious differences between the populations of the states, primarily influence the likelihood of militarized disputes. He also observed that the ethnic differences and power politics also played a role in the rise of a militarized interstate dispute. Thus this study also debunks the claim of Huntington that the conflicts in the post Cold War period are primarily the result of civilisational and religious differences especially among the people. (21)

Ryan M Galloway (22) uses the data from the Correlates of War Dataset which covers the period 1993-2001, as the earlier study by Russet used the data from 1950 to 1992. He mostly uses the Dyadic Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) Data. And notes that there were around 300 MID's from 1993-2001, with
over 503 dyadic MIDs of which 212 (42%) of the disputes occurred within civilization boundaries, 278 (55%) of the disputes occurred across civilization boundaries, and 13 (3%) involved Japan. As for the disputes within civilizations he observed that the West was involved in the largest number of disputes with a number of 191, followed by the Orthodox civilization totaling 169, Islam with 115, Sinic with 27, Latin America totaling 19, Africa 15, Hindu with 9, and the Buddhist civilization with 3 disputes. According to Galloway, the data analysed by him does not overwhelmingly support Huntington, but says it does not also refute it, as 55% of the cases support his theory and 42% refuting it. Hence it is his conclusion that the data is to some extent in Huntington's favor. But he says from the overall statistical point of view his study does not support Huntington's thesis. He also says that his analysis shows a slight trend for the West vs. the rest theory as the West is involved in the majority of disputes. He concludes that the other civilizations. He also finds that are involved in disputes with the West in a higher frequency than they are against each other. He holds that the results are in Huntington's favor only to a very small extent. He also notes that the Orthodox and Islam civilizations are still involved in a large number of disputes. His conclusion is that there is not enough evidence in favor of Huntington to adopt his theory on the West vs. the rest.

M. Shahid Alam has pointed out that "The Huntington thesis finds no support in the period before 1945. Of 18 major wars fought by great powers between 1600 and 1945, only six involved states from two or more civilizations. Once again, when Henderson and Tucker examined international wars between 1816 and 1945, with controls for other influences, they found that the probability of conflicts between two states was greater if they belonged to the same civilization. Quite the opposite of what Huntington predicts." (23) Empirical studies conducted by PRIO (Peace Research Institute in Oslo) has shown that in the period subsequent to propounding of clash of civilisations thesis by
Huntington, the conflict scenario in the world has been characterised more by internal conflicts than by bi-national and regional conflicts, than by any civilisation conflict. (24)

An opinion poll spread over three months period in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 attacks, regarding America's 'war on terrorism' conducted by the Pew Trust's Global Attitudes Project covered the views of 275 opinion leaders in twenty-four countries as of December 19, 2001. A majority of opinion leaders excluding American and Western European respondents, who were polled believed that U. S. policies were the main cause for the attacks. The poll indicated much resentment about the United States' power and global position. Thus the poll indicated ambivalent attitudes toward the United States.

More recently respondents from different countries of Africa, Europe and Asia were asked questions regarding relations between Muslims and Westerners around the world and majority of respondents said that they were generally bad. As regards the clash of civilizations idea there were mixed responses, but most did not agree with Huntington's thesis. Majority of respondents blamed both sides for the lack of understanding. Many others blamed the media and others blamed the political leaders. The responses were very mixed and many reasons were given for the problems between the Westerners and the non-Westerners, but the survey could hardly be said to be a referendum on whether there is a real clash of civilizations. (25)

A report submitted to the Dutch government, by the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) said that Islam is not incompatible with democracy and human rights. Based on studies in a several Muslim countries, the report highlighted the fact that there was diversity of thought among the various Muslim countries and said that though radical and jihadi trends were visible in these countries there were also slow but major movements towards democratization.
The Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) for the Netherlands, looked at the relations between Islam and democracy and in its report has stresses that in principle Islam does not conflicts with democracy and that there is no clash of civilizations. It has advised the Netherlands government that Islam being "in perfect dynamism" with democracy and human rights, it should: "Instead of exporting democracy to Muslim countries, democratic attempts harmonious with their own traditions and cultures must be supported." (26)

The report, by the Rand Corporation in association with the Smith Richardson Foundation titled *Civil Democratic Islam: Partners, Resources and Strategies* (March 2004), says that the West should help religious "modernists" in the Islamic world in order to prevent a "clash of civilizations. The report written by Cheryl Bernard says "Islam's current crisis has two main components: a failure to thrive and a loss of connection to the global mainstream. The Islamic world has been marked by a long period of backwardness and comparative powerlessness." The report however does not directly say that Huntington's thesis is wrong but clearly states that the cause of conflicts is political. The Report goes on to suggest ways of carefully democratizing the Muslim societies (27)

The impact of Huntington's theory on the world and the fear of such an eventuality befalling the world had led to international initiatives like the 'Dialogue Among Civilisations' and several international conferences to promote closer cooperation among people from different civilizations which, of course, indicated the adoption of civilizational perspective. Another stage began when Spanish President José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero introduced the concept of an Alliance of Civilizations in 2004, saying the group seeks to "stop all sources of extremism" and "win the battle of ideas and principles." Consequently, in order to further the Alliance of Civilizations, in the year 2005, the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan launched a global initiative called 'Alliance of Civilizations'
for forging closer and friendly relations among the civilisations. This initiative for an Alliance of Civilization was co-sponsored by Prime Minister of Spain, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in August 2005. This initiative put together a high level group cutting across different religions and nations to come up with an understanding of the contemporary world and to recommend the measures to bring about the amity of civilizations, cultures and people of the of the World. The group consisted of about twenty eminent personalities such as Nobel Peace Prize-winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu and former Iranian president Mohammed Khatami and others.

This Group met five times from November 2005 to November 2006, and produced a report by analysing the rise in cross-cultural polarization and extremism and adopted a multi-polar approach focusing on the relations between Muslim and Western societies. The Report of this High-level Group (28) was presented to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and to Prime Ministers José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on 13 November 2006 at the final meeting of the High-level Group in Istanbul, Turkey. This report was framed as a direct challenge to the notion that a "Clash of Civilizations" is imminent - a concept which was propounded by Samuel Huntington. The main findings of this study by UN was that the conflict between Israelis and the Palestinians is at the core of global tensions and is driving much of conflicts between the West and Muslims and the authors recommended immediate steps to resolve this problem preferable by holding an international conference on peace process in the middle east. It also suggested the appoint a high UN representative to assist in defusing cross-cultural tensions and establishment of UN forum for the alliance of civilizations. The overall conclusion of the Report is that the problems between the Muslim and the West are a matter of politics, and not of culture. The findings and recommendations of this report are expected to invigorate and create cross-cultural dialogue in the world. This UN Report, one of the latest in a long list of
conferences, reports, polls and surveys to test the validity of Huntington's thesis, can be considered the final nail in the coffin as it has clearly established the untruth of Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis.

Thus the Report debunked Huntington's thesis and suggested an alliance between different cultures, nations and people at all the levels, social, political and economic. The report takes a multipolar perspective and states that there is no hierarchy amongst cultures as each one of them has contributed to the evolution of mankind. The Report states that the core problem remains poverty and deprivation of vast sections of mankind. It says that the rising trend of terrorism cannot be dealt with by seeing it as a mere law and order problem or having its roots in religion. The Report says that terrorism is a product of political circumstances, which require resolution on urgent basis. The solution to the problem of terrorism does not lie in waging war with some countries or increasing the military presence in that area but in addressing the root causes of resentment. According to the Report main cause of the current violent lies in the unresolved Palestinian issue. The committee clearly takes a stand against terrorisms as being unacceptable. It considers the freedom of religions as very important and makes many recommendations in the areas of education, youth programs, community actions aimed at promoting alliance. It has also recommended that a forum of alliance of civilization under the auspices of UN be established to promote dialogue at all the levels. The Report is an attempt to undo the impact of Huntington's pernicious theory of clash of civilisations.

In one of the latest surveys carried out for BBC by Globescan it has been observed that there is a significant number of people who rejects the view that Islam and the West are doomed to clash. The survey covered 28,000 people in 27 countries and the overall majority believed there is no inherent incompatibility between the West and Islam, and did not agree that a collision was inevitable.
among them. The respondents believed that the intolerant minorities on both sides were responsible for the problems and not differences in cultures. The main finding was that tensions between the West and Muslim countries a result of conflicts over political power and interests, rather than differences of religion or culture. Most felt that fundamentalism, radicalism and conflict are produced by global inequalities of wealth and power. Also the Western foreign policy in Iraq, Afghanistan, Israel/Palestine and elsewhere were considered to be the main reasons for the problems between the West and Muslims. Hence most believed that there are political reasons for tensions between Muslims and the Westerners and the differences over religion and culture account for much less impact on their relations. Muslims respondents living in Western countries felt that they were the victims of social disadvantage and prejudice arising out of "Islamophobia". Most respondents said that the currently the world is living in a climate of polarization. But a significant numbers of people did not share the broadly optimistic view of the majority and expressed ambivalent and pessimistic views. Hence the survey paints a mixed picture, and this is not surprising and very much in keeping with the ground reality and contrary to the thesis of Huntington. (29) In one of the latest polls, conducted by Angus Reid Global Monitor, under the Program on International Policy Attitudes, adults surveyed in 27 countries asserted that the Muslim and Western cultures will find a way to prevent violent conflict by finding common ground. However, 40 per cent of those polled in Germany, Egypt and Indonesia believed that conflict is inevitable. Over 70 per cent of Italians, Canadians and Britons believed that it is possible to find common ground. (30)

Conclusion

All the empirical studies discussed above have used statistical analyses to test the validity of Huntington’s thesis. The focus of most of these studies was on how much of the Clash of Civilizations thesis could be explained using data from
militarized interstate disputes which had taken place in the post Cold War period. These studies have reported that the validity of Huntington's thesis is not clearly established. These empirical studies have had significant impact as they have raised serious doubts about the Clash of Civilizations thesis. Almost all of these scholars have found that there is hardly any evidence of a clash of civilisations in the world. And thus according to the UN Report, all these “empirical studies pose significant challenge to the clash of civilizations thesis”. (31) M. Shahid Alam has put it well “It will scarcely surprise anyone that a theory so weakly constructed as Huntington's should fail the empirical test: and its fails resoundingly.” (32)

9.2 Testing Huntington's Thesis-International Conflicts

Introduction

In the human history the twentieth century has been probably the most war ravaged century at a truly global scale. Apart from the two devastating world wars, the world had witnessed hundreds of large and small. Most of these conflicts were short lived though often intensive. After the world wars Asia witnessed some of the bloodiest and longest conflicts in the twentieth century. The noteworthy ones in this regard are the Korean conflict, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Iran-Iraq conflict, the conflict over Kashmir, the Sri Lankan conflict, the Afghan conflict, and so on. Of these, some conflicts have seen the end, such as Iran-Iraq war, but most have continued to rage with different intensities and include the Korean conflict and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular.

A paradigm or a tool is considered essential to understand the causes of these conflicts. During the post World War II period the Cold War paradigm was used to explain many of these conflicts. But in the post Cold War period Huntington touted his 'clash of civilisations' paradigm as the best tool to understand the emerging future conflicts. However, future conflicts suggested by Huntington have not yet materialised (though Huntington has asserted that the
present West-Islam conflict is one such future conflict) and hence to test Huntington’s thesis as a tool to explain conflicts, becomes a difficult task. But it would be interesting to see if Huntington’s thesis could be used to explain some of the longest conflicts witnessed by the world during the last century. Three conflicts which qualify to be long term conflicts have been chosen and each has a different perspective.

9.2.1 Case Study I: From Intra-religious Perspective:- Iran-Iraq Conflict

The Iran-Iraq War, also called as the First Gulf War, has been one of the bloodiest and ruthless wars of recent times taking a huge human toll. Lal Goel has therefore rightly commented that “The bloodiest conflict of the second half of the 20th century is the decade long war between Iran (Shia) and Iraq (Sunni governed)” (33)

The protracted military confrontation between Iran and Iraq between 1980 and 1988 has its roots in the events of the earlier years. The politics of 1970s in this Gulf region was characterized by a militarily strong Iran under the rule of the Iranian King Muhammad Reza Shah Pahleavi supported by its close ally the USA and a militarily weaker Iraq under the B’aathist rule having close links with the Soviets. In 1975, a militarily strong Iran under the Shah compelled the weaker Iraq to sign a treaty to hand over partial control of the Shatt al Arab waterway to Iran. Subsequently Iran witnessed Islamic Revolution under the leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini leading to the fall and exile of Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlevi in 1979 and declaration of Iran as an Islamic republic. Soon the ire of Iranians turned against USA leading to the hostage crisis which was resolved after a torturously long period of acrimony and negotiations between the Iranians and Americans. By 1980, due to internal turmoil and stoppage of American military supplies and spare parts to maintain American equipment, Iran’s military
strength weakened. At the same time Iran began to project itself as a true representative and leader of the Islamic world. Sensing a threat and seeing the weakening of Iran's military power, Iraq seized the opportunity to abrogate the 1975 treaty and reclaim the Shatt al Arab. Iraq was also eyeing the oil rich western Iranian region of Khuzestan and so it decided to launch an attack on Iran.

Iraq began a land and air invasion of western Iran on September 22, 1980 on the pretext that Iran has been shelling Iraq. Iraqi President Saddam Hussein cited the territorial dispute over the Shatt al Arab waterway, as the reason for Iraqi attack on Iran. Initially the Iraqi offensive seemed to be quite successful, as Iraq captured the Iranian port city of Khorramshahr towards the end of 1980. But with every passing day the Iranian resistance to Iraqi invasion and occupation grew stronger compelling the Iraqis to withdraw from the occupied parts of Iran in the early part of 1982. The Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini pledged that Iran would not stop fighting Iraq until Saddam Hussein's rule is overthrown. Iran then mounted a series of successful offensives, which led to Iraqi use of poison gas against the Iranian troops. Subsequently the battle intensified but without giving any clear victory either of the two. Iranian troops in early 1984 succeeded in capturing the oil-rich Majnoon Islands from Iraq. By early 1986 the Iranians also captured Iraq's southern Fao peninsula. During 1985 air and missile attacks on each other's cities, capitals and military installations were witnessed. The Americans supported the Iraqis in this war as Iranian-American relations had totally ruptured on account of the hostage taking of Americans by the Iranians after the Revolution. Iraqis also enjoyed the support of many Arab nations. The Iranians received support and supplies from anti-US countries like Syria, Libya, China and North Korea.

However, while the battles were raging, the war was not making any progress and no clear victor was emerging. Battle fatigue had also set in on both
sides. Tremendous destruction and havoc has been experienced by both sides. Iran was unable to obtain arms supplies and Iraq was unable to wrest a victory. Both were now unable to sustain war. The UN had been mean while making efforts to bring an end to this long waging war. Finally, in July, 1988, Iran and Iraq ended the war under a United Nations mandated cease-fire. It was estimated that the dead from this war were around 1.5 million and without much gain for either side in terms of territory. However the Iraqis had made some territorial gains which they vacated in 1990 after agreeing to accept the terms of the 1975 treaty with Iran. Exchange of prisoners of war followed in the following years until 2003. The Iran-Iraq war had finally ended weakening both and having no clear victor. It was a senseless, brutal and a protracted war which hardly benefited the two.

Thus, though the Iran-Iraq conflict has a long history dating back to the ancient rivalry between the Arabs and the Persians it is the more recent history of border disputes and control of important Shatt al Arab waterway and some islands in the oil rich Persian Gulf region which is the main cause for their war. Serious political differences between the regimes of Iran and Iraq have been another cause of this conflict. Competition to acquire leadership among the Islamic countries and the ideological differences between the two, have been the other reasons for the protracted war between Iran and Iraq. Before the Iran-Iraq war and after it, the acrimony and conflict has persisted. This war has been infamous for extensive use of chemical weapons by Iraqi forces against Iranian troops, Iranian civilians and Iraqi Kurds who were collaborating with the Iranians. And though the war finally ended in a ceasefire in August 1988, it irrevocably changed the Gulf region politics and catapulted it into a wider global political and conflictual quagmire. Iran and Iraq (during Saddam period) have continued to seek domination of the Gulf region and acquire the leadership of the Muslim nations especially of the Middle east, and this has reflected in their military and nuclear ambitions.
Given this long standing acrimonious relationship, some have tried to give a twist to their conflict by saying that, though, both the nations are Islamic they have sectarian differences and that historically they belong to different civilisations, an Arabic civilisation and a Persian civilisation. All evidence and scholarly opinion points to the fact that the conflict between these two countries, though certainly characterised by sectarian animosity, is primarily political and revolves round their particular national interests. The main reason for animosity and acrimony between Iran and Iraq, according to most scholars boils down to their desire to dominate a vital and strategic oil rich region and to acquire the leadership in the predominantly Muslim Middle east region. And in spite of the historical past, differences in languages and sectarian differences they hardly perceive themselves and their conflict in the civilisational terms.

9.2.2 Case Study II : From Inter-religious Perspective:- The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

One of the most well-known and protracted conflicts in the world, has been the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is a conflict with a long history, a conflict exhibiting spiralling violence for over a century and showing no signs of abating. Like the Iran-Iraq conflict the history of Israeli-Palestinian conflict goes back into history and arises from their different perceptions of history. History is an important factors in the Arab-Israeli conflict because the present conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians is directly related to the past events. According to archaeological records the Jewish people who are a Semitic people called the 'hapiru' or Hebrews came out of the land of Mesopotamia somewhere around 1800 B.C.E. The biblical accounts talk of as settling down of Abraham, who is considered as the founding Patriarch of Judaism, in the land called Canaan, the present day Palestine. Actually Jews are said to have evolved out of amalgamation of different tribes from Canaan such as the Semites, the Hittites, the Philistines, Mycenaeans or ancient Greeks.
The story of the Jewish kingdom begins with David who conquered Jerusalem about 1000 B.C.E., united the various Jewish tribes and set up the Israelite kingdom over Canaan and Transjordania. King David was succeeded by his son Solomon who built the Jewish Temple at Jerusalem on Mount Zion. The kingdom of Israel was divided into Judea in the south and Israel in the north after the death of Solomon and then on Jews had a chequered history. However Jerusalem continued to be the center of Jewish identity and worship. Around 61 B.C.E, Roman ruler Pompeii invaded Judea and ended the sovereign rule of the Jews and installed puppet rule under the Roman with King Herod as the ruler of a client state of Rome. Having lost their sovereignty the Jews struggled against the Roman power and rose up in revolts which were put down by the Romans in 70 C.E and 132 C.E. During this period the Romans razed the Jewish temple to the ground and the Jews began to dream of rebuilding their Temple. But in 135 C.E. the Romans, disgusted with the Jewish resistance and challenge, drove the Jews out of Jerusalem. While most of the Jews from the southern part of the region fled some continued to live in the northern parts of the territory. The Jews thus became the exiled people forming a Jewish Diaspora which came to spread from Europe, North Africa to India. These Jews lived in mostly the Jewish Ghettos or Jew towns across three continents.

In the Second century of the Common Era the Romans named the place earlier occupied by Jews as Palaestina, which is how it came to be called Palestine. Palestine remained under the Roman rule till the Byzantine Empire emerged and took over. After the expulsion of the Jews by the Romans, Palestine came to be occupied by the newly converted Christians and other people. But in the seventh century a new faith was born in the close by Arabian region which was called Islam. Soon after, the Arabs moved north from Arabia and Palestine came under the rule of the Islamic rulers. The region again became the focal point during the Crusades of the eleventh century. But after the end of the 'Holy Wars' of the middle ages between the Christians and the Muslims, the region of Palestine
was inhabited by mostly Muslims and many Christians and continued under the control of Muslim rulers until the end of the nineteenth century.

But in the nineteenth century Jewish revivalism began, inspired by ideas of the French Revolution. Zionist writings began to appear among the European Jews and were especially spearheaded by Rabbi Yehuda Alcalay around 1840. The European Jews began the Zionist movement with nationalist aspirations in the late 1800s. The goal of the Zionists was to emigrate and claim their original 'promised land' by establishing their own homeland or sovereign state called Israel. The Zionist movement for the emancipation of Jews triggered greater anti-Semitism in Europe, especially in Germany and Eastern Europe resulting in oppression of Jews in Europe in late 1800s. The result was the beginning of Jewish emigration to Palestine. Theodor Herzl organised the First Zionist Congress in Basle in 1897 which led to the Zionist movement becoming a formal organization with the avowed goal of establishing the state of Israel in the region called as Palestine.

Britain, conceding to the request of Zionist in Britain and in consideration of its strategic interests, declared its support to the Jewish Homeland of Israel in its Balfour Declaration of November 1917 and subsequently after conquering Jerusalem and Palestine during the World War I began permitting the resettlement of Jews in the Palestinian areas under its control. The Arabs expressed their strong opposition to the idea of a Jewish nation in Palestine which they considered as their land. The Arabs living in the Palestine realising the danger of dispossession of their lands by the Zionists, and the prospects of living under Jewish rule began to resist the increasing Jewish emigration into Palestine well before the World War II. The seeds of the inevitable conflict between the Palestinian Arab inhabitants and the emigrating Israelis came to be sown. Riots erupted between the two communities and both began to employ terroristic tactics and violence. The outbreak of World War II and killing of Jews by Hitler and his Nazis only intensified the emigration of Jews into Palestine resulting in even more conflict between the Jews and the Arabs in Palestine. Jewish militia Haganah and Arab
resistance waged running battles. The Arab revolt of 1936 led to the British curtailing the Jewish emigration, which then continued illegally. The UN tried to intervene in this conflict by setting up the UN Special Commission of Palestine (UNSCOP). The UN General Assembly by its resolution of November 29, 1947 recommended an international status to Jerusalem and a two nation solution which was accepted by the Jews but rejected by the Palestinians and the Arabs. The conflict began to intensify. Consequently, the Jews proclaimed an independent state of Israel on May 14, 1948, and the British withdrew from Palestine. This led to the Arab invasion of Israel, but the Arabs were unable to defeat the Jewish forces and instead more Arab territories, especially to the west of River Jordan came under the Israeli control by the end of this conflict in 1949. The UN also did not do much.

The Israelis took to ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians using terroristic violence and the Palestinians were forced to take refuge in the neighbouring Arab countries like, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

The Palestinian exiles now dreamed of returning to Palestine and reclaiming their land. This desire led to the establishment of Palestinian liberation groups during the 1950s and 1960s. These included Yasser Arafat’s Fatah or Harakat Tahrir Filistin - the Palestine Liberation Movement in 1957 and George Habash’s Popular Liberation Front of Palestine. During the 1960s Arafat’s Fatah began to exert pressure on the Arab nations to militarily destroy Israel. Consequently, the 6-Day War erupted in 1967 between Israel and the Arab nations of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. This war was lost by the Arab nations. The balance of power changed in the Middle East as Israel acquired extensive territories – Egypt’s Sinai plateau, Syria’s Golan Heights and Jordan’s West Bank, thereby extending it borders much further. This was soon followed by Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. In October 1973 there was yet another war called as the October War or Yom Kippur War in which Egypt and Syria tried to wrest their lands back from Israel but Israel after major losses finally succeeded to hold them. In both
these wars the Palestinian fighters also participated against Israel. In 1978 the Israelis and Egyptians made peace under US support and Israel returned the Sinai plateau to Egypt in 1982.

In Lebanon there was a relatively large population of Palestinian refugees, who were aligned with the Hizbollah, a local militia. Having been thrown out by Jordan due to their revolt, the PLO fighters went into Lebanon, which led to the civil war. When a Palestinian group killed Israeli Ambassador Shlomo Argov in London, Israel invaded Lebanon and war broke out. The Palestinian fighters participated in this war against Israelis in 1986. This was followed by protracted diplomatic efforts and negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians. Finally in 1993 and 1995, Israel and the PLO signed two agreements called as the Oslo Declaration of Principles and The Oslo Interim Agreement which led to the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), who would negotiate with the Israelis to achieve the goal of independent Palestinian State along side Israel. As per this agreement Israel would withdraw from all Palestinian occupied territories. In 1994 Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty and relations were normalised. The peace process between the Israelis and the Palestinians led to the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip and most cities and towns of the West Bank by the beginning of 1996.

In January 1996, Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian-controlled parts of the West Bank for the first time elected a legislature in which the Fatah faction, of Yasser Arafat became the predominant group. With the Israelis withdrawing from parts of Palestinian areas, the Palestinians took control of those areas but this constituted only 8% of the land with 97% of the Palestinian population. But Israelis continued with their settlement programme even more vigorously thereby further annoying the
Palestinians. Consequently, Palestinian violence, popularly termed as the Second Intifada, erupted on September 28, 2000, and was triggered by a visit of Ariel Sharon to the Temple mount in Jerusalem where the Al-Aqsa mosque, holy to Muslims is located. The rumours that Sharon had entered the mosque fanned the violence and soon it became widespread. The result of this was that the goal of realising a sovereign Palestinian State came to be thwarted. The Geneva Accord of 2003 was proposed to replace the earlier Oslo Accord. This agreement required Israel to give up sovereignty in Arab portions of Jerusalem, and the Palestinians to renounce the right of Palestinian refugees to return to Israel. It did not make much headway. On November 11, 2004 Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat died and Israeli-Palestinian peace process seemed uncertain. But on January 9, 2005, Mahmoud Abbas, was elected President of the Palestine National Authority and the peace process was pushed forward.

And then on January 4, 2006, Ariel Sharon, Israeli Prime Minister suffered a massive stroke thereby becoming incapacitated, leaving Ehud Olmert of the new Kadima Party to deal with the Palestinians. Not much progress was made thereafter due to continuing Palestinian violence. On January, 26, 2006, the radical Hamas movement won an unexpected victory over the governing Fatah in the Palestinian elections. Immediately Hamas announced openly that it will not negotiate with the Israelis and that it wanted the destruction of Israel. Relations between Hamas and Fatah soured and all negotiations came to a standstill. European and American leaders refused to provide aid to the Palestinians until the Hamas government renounced terrorism, disarmed and recognized Israel. Hamas has consistently refused to concede to this and this has led to a deadlock within the Palestinian Authority. Hamas and Fatah not only disagreed but also fought pitched violent gun-battles during late 2006 and early 2007. In the March 28, 2006, elections in Israel, the Kadima party led by Ehud Olmert won the elections and then refused to negotiate with Hamas led
government. But the Israelis have continued to maintain rapport with Mahmoud Abbas. On July 12, 2006 Hezbollah militants after an attack into Northern Israel, kidnapped two soldiers after killing three others and this led to Israeli incursion and attack in the southern Lebanese strong-hold of Hezbollah, who is a strong supporter of the Palestinian cause. The Israeli offensive did not achieve its objectives and led to Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon after a month. After the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, Israeli-Palestinian conflict raged in Gaza until Israel finally withdrew from Gaza (which it had entered due to the rocket attacks by the Palestinians) on November 26 2006.

Subsequently in 2007, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert announced a new Israeli initiative to settle the Palestinian issue. Two important reports during the last six months, namely the UN Report on Alliance of Civilisations and the American Report of the Iraq Study Group, have both recommended that Israeli-Palestinian issue must be sorted out urgently. In this direction the latest Palestinian Unity government of Hamas and Fatah in March 2007 and the Olmert-Abbas meeting in April 2007 have taken place to try to settle the problem between the Israelis and Palestinians. There is no clear end to conflict yet in sight though US Secretary of State Dr. Condolessa Rice has begun fresh efforts to bring the Israelis and Palestinians together to resolve the problem. It remains to be seen how these talks will progress and when the two nation solution becomes a reality.

Huntington has consistently attempted to portray the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a civilisational conflict and following him some scholars have attempted to present the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a proof of the clash of civilisation. In his scheme of civilisations Huntington has classified Israel as ‘Western’ being “created by the West.”(Samuel P. Huntington, “Clash of Civilisations?” Foreign Affairs Summer 1993: p13) He hold that the Muslims, in this case the Palestinians, like with the West are involved in a civilisational war
with the Jews. Therefore the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been used by many as evidence for Huntington's thesis of the a clash between the 'West' and 'Islam.' Engin Erdem has therefore stated that "The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has overwhelmingly topped into regional and global agenda as a result of increasing tension in the region. The conflict has accelerated the debate for 'clash of civilizations', asking the question; to what extent the conflict can be considered within the realm of clash of civilizations?" (Engin I. Erdem The 'Clash of Civilizations': Revisited after September 11 Alternatives Turkish Journal of International Relations Vo. 1 Number 2 Summer 2002) Some in the Muslim world, in Israel as well as the West have attempted to paint the Palestinian-Israeli conflict with civilisational clash brush.

However, Ami Isseroff, Ian J. Bickerton, Carla L. Klausner, Dan Cohn-Sherbok, Benny Morris, James L. Gelvin, Avraham Sela, Charles D. Smith, Mark Tessler, Bernard Wasserstein, Noam Chomsky, Norman Finkelstein and scores of other writers and scholars who have written about the Israeli-Palestinian problem during the last decade have never attempted to characterize the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Huntingtonian terms. And although Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been raging for a century and qualifies as a long drawn out or protracted conflict most of the scholars do not see it as a civilisational conflict between the Israelis(Jews) and Palestinians(Arabs). Almost all scholars believe that the roots of Israeli-Palestinian conflict lie in nationalism and nationhood and hence consider the conflict as primarily political and statist. These scholars point out that the main issues which fuel the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are not civilisational or cultural but are about the illegitimate military occupation of Palestine territories by Israel, the status and future of the Palestinian territories and Palestinian state, Israeli security and it's right to exist, problems of refugees, fate of settlements, sovereignty over Jerusalem and the holy sites, restrictions on Palestinian political
and economic freedoms by Israelis, Israeli fears of terrorist and rocket attacks by Palestinian militant groups, sharing of land and resources, and so on.

Like many other writers and scholars, John Petrovato criticises attempts to present Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a civilisational clash. He says, "The fact of the matter is that such a clash is a constructed theory that has little basis in reality. It was developed and used for political and ideological reasons and have been used to justify war and ethnic cleansing. If wars are to be resisted and conflicts resolved, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we need to avoid accepting the dangerously simplistic ideas that are put forth by strictly partisan authors." (34)

Prominent Israeli intellectuals particularly Amos Oz and Emannuel Adler have strongly condemned the categorizations of the Huntingtonian paradigm, and have preferred to look at Israel in more inclusive manner. These scholars do not agree that just because the West helped the creation of Israel it is a part of the West and hence part of the Western civilization. These scholars like most other scholars who have analysed Israeli-Palestinian problem, state that essentially, this conflict has mostly to do with land and hardly anything with the intercivilizational rivalry suggested by Huntington. Scholars point out that the ultimate objective of the Israel-Palestine conflict is to acquire land and free it of the other. Even the emergence of the Zionism and Hamas is attributed to conflicting ideologies based around the issue of land and not based on civilization. Thus for the scholars it is political and geographical differences which constitute the core of the Middle East conflict and not the clash of the two 'civilisations' as Huntington has suggested.

For both the Israelis and the Palestinians the conflict is a sacred battle to uphold their dignity and land. It has been stated by some scholars that "Huntington’s description of two inalienable peoples in conflict seems to coincide exactly with the Middle East imbroglio. But upon further study, it appears that the
situation is not as reminiscent of Huntington's 'Clash of Civilisations' as one would think." (35)

There has always been a fear among the Palestinians of being abandoned by the Arabs and Muslims. And though the Palestinian have consistently attempted to seek support from the wider Arab and Muslim world, they have also realised that, in the final analysis, the Arab and other Muslims governments seek their own national and political interest above those of the Palestinian people struggling for their self determination and liberation from Israeli occupation. During, Cold War period, pan-Arabism was the trend and the Palestinian struggle led by PLO was viewed as a struggle of pan-Arabism in order to assert the Arabic identity. But with the rise of Islamism, identifying with Islam became the new pre-occupation among the Palestinian Muslims leading to emergence of Islamist groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad. But even in this attempt to reposition and redefine their identity as Islamic, the Palestinian cause has not succeeded in getting the support of the so called Islamic civilization to wage a decisive battle against Israel. The recent conflict involving Israel with the Palestinians and their supporters Hezbollah in Lebanon has not seen any civilisational conflict taking place, one which is supported by the entire Muslim world. This is proof enough that, the civilisational conflict paradigm propounded and aggressively pushed by Huntington does not hold any firm ground in the murky waters of Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is but a nationalist conflict over land, though use of terror by both sides as a tactical and strategic weapon is a fact that cannot be denied but could be explained on the grounds that the conflict is a long drawn one in which stakes for both groups are so high that terrorism seems justified in the eyes of both the parties to the conflict. This view that the Israeli – Palestinian conflict is not a civilisational or even a purely communal conflict, but a nationalist one is borne out by the views widely expressed by most of the scholars on the
subject as well as people in America, Europe and the Middle East. In four different national surveys conducted by University of Maryland (USA) in its “Program on International Policy Attitudes” during 2002 and 2003, and which is in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, it was found that more than half of the respondents viewed Israel-Palestinian conflict as a nationalist conflict over land. Actually very few saw it as a part of America ‘war on terror’ and hardly anyone considered it as a civilisational conflict. This conforms to the general view among people about Israeli-Palestinian conflict and is in sharp contrast to what Huntington would want us to believe.

One of the bases for explaining conflict, by those who support the ethnic or nationalist argument, is the idea of “national suffering” or “prism of pain”. In this perspective conflict is rooted in the “wrong doing” which leads to “desire for vengeance”. This explanation has been put forward to explain many conflicts which are either ongoing, such as the Israeli – Palestinian or the new ones, such as in the erstwhile communist Eastern European countries and the latest American ‘war on terror’. In all these conflicts, a group or a nationality has suffered pain at the hands of another group and now seeks revenge. The ethnic cleansing by Serbians in Bosnia, the occupation of Palestine by Israelis, the attack on September 11 are cited as the few of the instances of “national suffering” that have led to terrible conflicts. In the ultimate analysis, all these conflicts boil down to the nationalist causes and not civilisational. This has been supported by scholars like Stuart Kaufman, Shibley Telhami and many others. These scholars opine that this “national suffering” or “prism of pain” leads to revenge, in turn leading to conflict and inflicting of pain on the “original aggressors” who in turn are “pained” and they consequently retaliate, thus leading to a vicious circle of “pain” and “hatred” and a long conflict in the making. Such long conflicts, therefore are not explainable by using civilisational paradigm but by nationalist paradigm based on historical past.
It is a known fact that, while similarity helps bonding, differences among people lead to conflicts due to disagreements, differing world-views, different lifestyles, clashing value-systems, and so on. But to give this normal human historical predicament, the colour of civilisational conflicts is preposterous. Therefore the Israeli-Palestinian conflict far from being a proof of a civilisational conflict is actually its repudiation. In the ultimate analysis this conflict is all about desire for power and domination in order to ensure the survival of the communities in question. It is a political battle through and through. The fact, that the two communities belong to different religions and civilisations is incidental.

9.2.3 Case Study III : From Ideological Perspective: North Korean-South Korean Conflict

Another conflict that qualifies as a protracted and dangerous is the Korean conflict. Like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict the Korean conflict has ben dragging on without any solution is sight. The Korean conflict has less to do with the past history and more with the contemporary situation of the twentieth century especially, the Second World War period. The Korean War was to control man’s minds ideologically and had become a battleground for ideological war in the post World War II era of the Cold War. Much of the war was a proxy war but everyone knew who was fighting and what the fight was for.

The Korean War has its roots in Soviet and Stalin’s intention to export communism to Far East and South East. The Soviets had got many concessions at Yalta Conference such as Kurile Islands etc. from Japan and wished to extent its sphere of influence to China, Manchuria and further. The Korean imbroglio was a result of attempts by the leaders of two ideological camp to extend their sphere of influence in South East Asia ad Far East. The Soviets were very much worried due to US supremacy in the Pacific after the US defeat of Japan. The coming to power of the communist in China under Mao’ leadership only strengthened the communist push into South East and Far East. Korea was important for Soviets
because in 1904 Japan had defeated Russia in Korea and in 1945 it sought to establish its stranglehold in Korea. Similarly, in 1895 Japan had clashed with China in Korea and now China also wanted to assert itself in Korea, which it considered its backyard. Traditionally Korea had been an important strategic location in the Far and South East Asia. Korea, which is a peninsula 500 miles long extending into South China Sea. From the Chinese point of view it had good resources, port and strategic location. During the early part of 20th century Korea has been the launching pad for the invasion of Japan or a passagr for a march into Manchuria (China). Given this situation Korea has been a target of invasions by the Chinese, then the Japanese and the Russians. The prolonged occupation of Korea by Japan led to impoverishment of the Korean people and soon Koreans took to resisting Japan. As Japan collapsed in 1945 and Korea came to be divided at 38th parallel between Soviet and America controlled Koreas. The 38th parallel a politically determined line resulted out of the World War II and dividing the Korean peninsula on ideological and military basis in the new context of the post-World War II period. In 1945 Korea, was effectively divided into North Korea, an industrial hub, was occupied by Soviets and the Chinese and South Korea, a primarily agricultural land, was occupied by Americans.

Historically the Koreans were never divided before. The dividing line ran through rugged mountains, rivers, and hilly areas cutting Korea into almost two equal halves. The industrial North had 9 million people in 1945 and agricultural South had 21 million people. The Koreans witnessed the end of one bondage (of Japanese imperialism) and beginning of another (ideological imperialism of USSR and USA who had sought to defeat the Japanese imperialism during the World War II). The American occupation of South Korea was blatantly visible but Soviet involvement in North Korea was better camouflaged and operated through puppet regimes. The North Korean leader Kim II Sung was a great hero of Koreans fighting Japanese and his legend was perpetuated by his close compatriot Kim Sung Chui who soon nationalised private property and estates and brought about
the re-distribution of land among peasants. The North Koreans were greatly happy with this initial socialist pattern of economy and became staunchly communist in orientation. The early North Korean socialist reforms in the long term became quite burdensome to the peasants and led to gradual impoverishment of the rich and industrially developed North Korea over a 50 year period. The South Korea on the other hand experienced a very opposite development. Initially South Korea experienced the rigours of American occupation, military rule and clash of cultures.

The North Korean strategy was to ultimately invade South Korea and change South Korean ideologically to communism and to unite the whole of Korea. But Americans took the Korean issue to UN in 1947. After the question of re-unification was referred to UN, which agreed to hold free and fair elections in entire Korea through UN Commission but Soviet Union never allowed the election in the North Korea as it went against the very notion of communist philosophy which was antithetical to democracy identified with capitalism. Elections were therefore held only in South Korea and a Government was set-up under pro-western leader Lee Sung Man (called by American as Syngman Rhee). Consequently, UN recognized only South Korea as legitimate while Soviet Union recognized the North Korea.

In North Korea, the Korean Communist Party under Kim Il Sung framed a communist constitution on lines of the Bulgarian Communist constitution and established one-party communist government. Thus Korea came to be effectively divided on ideological grounds. Both, USA and USSR withdrew their forces from South Korea and North Korea. The North Korean government came to be under absolute control of Soviets by 1948 though Soviet Army had left by December 1948 and North Korean army was established under the North Korean commander Nam Il. Syngman Rhee ruled the South Korea and the American troops had withdrawn by June 1948 but without providing a strong military set-up for
Syngman Rhee. The Americans had feared that if Syngman Rhee was provided with a strong South Korean army he might invade North Korea to unite the two Koreas and this could lead to Soviet-American conflict over Korea. This led to a lopsided military balance on the Korean peninsula—a strong well armed communist North Korea and a weak ill armed South Korea. Soon the Americans lost interest in South Korea by 1950 and focused more on Japan and Pacific. Seizing this opportunity, the North Korean communists, with the help of its army and communist comrades within South Korea, invaded South Korea on 25 June 1950. Around 90,000 troops, hundreds of tanks and barrage of warplanes went into South Korea after putting into effect a meticulous military invasion plan. The South Korean resistance was weak and patchy and they were unprepared, ill-equipped, ill-trained and surprised by DPRK invasion. The North Korean invaders were on the way to taking Seoul, capital of South Korea. The US and UN immediately declared that the DPRK invasion amounted to war against the UN, which had tried to settle the Korean issue earlier.

At the UN Security Council meeting of 26 June 1950, Soviet Union absented due to continuing boycott of UN Security Council on issue of communist China's exclusion as one of the Big Five and hence the UN Security Council passed a resolution calling for cease fire and withdrawal of DPRK beyond 38th Parallel. Realising the threat of communism to smaller countries and Japan, US under President Truman decided to provide aid to South Korea to fight spread of communism. The US troops, with contingents from 15 other nations under UN mandate and command of Douglas MacArthur launched the defense of South Korea on 1 July 1950. The US Seventh Fleet was part of the force that US sent to Korea under the command of General MacArthur. Using the UN resolutions as a mandate, the US-led forces began their operations from Pusan in South Korea to drive out the North Korean troops. After many ambushes, skirmishes and battles the UN backed US-led multi-national forces began to push out the North Koreans and prevented the formation of a united Korea under the communist and finally
achieved the push back of the North Koreans deep inside the Korean peninsula in the north.

By this time China, which had become communist in 1949 and faced a rebel capitalist Taiwan also became a part of the ideological struggle on the Korean peninsula. The Chinese entered the Korean War on 16 Oct 1950 and got involved on the side of the communist North Korea resulting in the Korean War getting prolonged until 1953. The reason for Chinese entry into the Korean War was on account of fear that Americans would cross 38th parallel into North Korea, which was communist and a buffer. The American and South Korean forces reached Pyongyang in the North as North Korean forces were weak and depleted, The US and South Korean troops, under UN command, subsequently reached the Chinese border area of Yerla River near Manchuria and China then decided to intervene and sent its troops to North Korea and drove back the UN commanded forces. The Chinese Red Army took up the battle for not just the North Koreans but to protect its own interests. The Chinese Red Army was sent in the garb of Chinese communist people’s volunteers and pushed UN backed forces beyond the 38th parallel by end of 1950 and then went beyond, till Seoul but could not hold Seoul for long as US-led retaliation with Sabre-jets and tanks pushed Chinese back. The Korean War could have taken dangerous turn and turned nuclear but President Truman decided to halt further invasion of North Korea. Soviet leader Josef Stalin supported North Korea and China in their resistance of the West-led attack on North Korea.

Thus the Korean War in the second half was essentially a war between the US-led capitalist forces (with UN backing) and China-led communism forces (with Soviet backing). The brutal fighting finally forced the two sides to sign a ceasefire agreement between the two Koreas legitimizing the division of Korea. Pyongyang became the capital of communist North Korea, also called a Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and Seoul became the capital of capitalist South Korea called as Republic of Korea. Peace negotiations began in
1953 as US had a new President Eisenhower and in July 1953 Armistice was signed ending the Korean War. But formal peace agreement could not be signed and till date the two Koreas are technically at war.

Thus during the 1950s, the Chinese and Soviets supported and promoted communism in South East Asia and the US and its Western allies tried to contain it. The Korean War and division of Korea into North Korea and South Korea was the result of an ideological battle being waged by two different ideological camps, the communists and the capitalists. This was essentially the first major battle of the ideological Cold War between the capitalist West, led by USA and communist East, led by USSR. The end result of the Korean War was the emergence of North Korea as a communist nation and South Korea as a capitalist country, each under the sphere of influence of their respective ideological masters. The North Koreans tried to export communism to South Korea with the support of USSR and China, and, South Korea tried to resist the spread of communism with the help of USA, other Western powers and Japan, who had become an ally of US and joined the capitalist camp, after its defeat in the World War II. The Korean War, like the Vietnam War was a victory for the communist ideology and the capitalist camp was purely on the defensive. North Korea became a satellite of Chinese communist power, and till date China has been the greatest supporter and friend of North Korea and is supporting communism in North Korea, while the US has done the same in case of South Korea.

The Korean War, fought for protecting the South Korea, a capitalist bastion, showed that the people were generally quite indifferent to the results. The Koreans of South Korea regarded the protecting American forces more as aliens than their northern brethren. The Korean war, fought by the Koreans with outside involvement of capitalist US and Western capitalist powers on one side and communist USSR and Eastern communist power China, was essentially an ideological war heralding the beginning of the long Cold War that lasted for the next 50 years dividing the world into two camps of communists and capitalists.
Actually in the Korean War the Koreans, from both North and South found the Americans more alien and repulsive than each other. The Korean War was neither for any patriotic reason, ethnic cause or religious purpose but was an absolutely political war. The conflict was neither cultural nor civilisational but ideological. The Korean War was a limited war and its aim was to thwart the spread of rival ideology. The Korean War, fought by US under the banner of UN ‘Police Action’, was essentially a war for protecting capitalism and containing the spread of communism. The UN resolutions and mandate was itself propelled and initiated by its capitalist members, when the communist member USSR had absented due to expulsion of China and hence could not veto the UN action in Korea. Hence the Korean War was result of peculiar conditions prevailing at the end of the World War II.

The Korean War, which was an ideological battle ground, fought between outsiders siding divide Koreas, finally ended with an armistice which was more de facto and less de jure. Though it was an officially agreed ceasefire and silenced the guns, it was not a peace agreement. The truce which came into effect on 27 July 1953 has been a shaky truce and many small skirmishes have occurred across North Korea-South Korea borders, underground tunnelling, hostile propaganda, political and military blackmail between the two sides have continued till date. Many attempts have been made by both Koreas to initiate dialogue and, unification talks have been started and stalled many times. The US still has military presence in South Korea and China still has control in North Korea. However the Asian economic miracle has led to South Korea becoming more prosperous. And the rise of capitalist globalization, its imbibement by communist China has left North Korea isolated, poor, desolate and backward and this has forced North Korea, out of a severe sense of insecurity of its communist regime, to turn to nuclear weapons and missiles during 2006. This has begun a new era of tension on the Korean peninsula and Far East and negotiations to resolve this long standing conflict have got bogged down and efforts to revive it have been slow.
Thus the divide between the North and South Korea is essentially an ideologically driven divide and conflict and has really no civilizational links. As a matter of fact the Koreans, whether from North or South, are a distinct group with an unique culture and are quite different from its neighbours, the Chinese as well as the Japanese. And yet the two parts of Korea have aligned with two different groups purely on ideological grounds and not on any kind of civilization affinity. The clash or conflict between the two Koreas is essentially an ideological clash and is not even remotely connected with civilizational differences and hence the two Koreas constantly talk of reunification which is clearly not a feature in case of so-called clash of civilisations.

Selig S. Harrison (Selig S. Harrison. Korean Endgame: A Strategy for Reunification and U.S. Disengagement Princeton, Princeton University Press 2002) talks about the possibility of Korean reunification and denuclearisation by removing the Cold War period ideological divide, which clearly suggests that longstanding Korean conflict can be resolved amicably and peacefully. Harrison argues that the Korean conflict is nothing but an ideological conflict in which people are divided by economic and political ideologies and not by any civilisational preferences or differences. The North Korean leader Kim Il Sung succeeded in adopting communist totalitarianism to such a fanatical extent in North Korea that it has no equal either in Soviet Union or in China. He was able to do this by using ideas and ideology already existing in the Korean culture which generally stressed importance of ideas and ideology over material conditions. Kim actually Koreanised communism to such extent that the communist ideology in its Korean form not only became something unique and to be proud about, but also fanatical to the point of attempting to export it to all of Korea, that is, to the South Korea which had resisted it under the US support. The Korean War was not a civil war that was catapulted to international scene, but a conflict, that was a direct result of ideological rivalry between opposing camps of capitalism and communism.
Historians like James I. Matray, William Stueck, and theorists like R.J.Rummel, and many others have resorted to in-depth analysis of the Korean conflict. All these scholars and historians concede that the protracted conflict between the two Koreas was essentially an ideological one and is not even remotely connected with civilizational differences or civilisational alignments and this is evidenced by desire and efforts of the two Koreas to bring about Korean reunification. The fact that this ideological conflict has prolonged well into the post Cold War period, has belied Huntington’s main hypothesis that the conflicts in the post Cold War period will not be due to ideological or economic reasons but due to cultural and civilisational differences. The Korean conflict also repudiates Huntington’s clash of civilizations thesis.

Conclusion

None of the three protracted conflicts discussed above can be explained using civilisational clash analysis. All the three conflicts belie and defy many of Huntington’s main theoretical arguments, especially that protracted conflicts have civilisational basis or underpinnings. Long standing conflicts can be and have been a result of political ambitions (Iran-Iraq), nationalist aspirations (Israeli-Palestinian) and ideological differences (Korean). Anecdotal statistics apart, there really is no proof that a protracted conflict on civilisational lines is taking place anywhere in the world and this is over a decade since Huntington made the prediction. The so-called ‘War on Terror’ also does not qualify to be termed as a civilisational conflict as the problem of terrorism is far more complex to be easily cloaked in civilisational terms. The truth of the matter is that all conflicts, in the ultimate analysis, are grounded in politics and are for reasons of power and dominance.
IV

ALTERNATIVES TO
HUNTINGTON’S THEORY