

which declares that in the post Cold War period “the clash of civilisations will dominate global politics . . . the next world war . . . will be a war between civilisations.” For Huntington and like-minded reductionist’s, in an increasingly inter-related world the nation state will be diminished in importance giving rise to the differences between civilisations. In reality civilisations like countries are complex. There is no evidence to support nation state decline. Diverse and contradictory values make up nations as they do civilisations. The Iran-Iraq War, the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the conflicts among Muslim countries as well as among Islamic movements, do not support Huntington’s monolithic Islamic threat. Islam is heterogeneous and its political—economic motivations vary across state and interest group.

However even given its diversity, many in the West believe that the rhetoric of militant Islam, while it includes specific denunciations of Israel, is directed at a still larger target, namely Western culture. Many experts and theorists state that the West is under institutional attack with its Enlightenment tradition at risk. The West’s reliance upon a secularism which confines organized religion and its consumerist/materialist culture with all of its virtues and faults remains at odds with the Islamic theocratic agenda (and, indeed, that of many Christians). Osama bin Laden and other Islamic militants decry the permissiveness of American and western lifestyle in general, their degenerate character which allows a high degree of expression from alternative subcultures, traditions, fads and points of view. Reforms in the West, which over past decades have permitted greater freedoms for gays, females, and minorities, incur the obloquy of fundamentalists.

Some analysts and Arab sympathizers including many Europeans and those at the UNO feel that America has reaped the consequence of past actions and policies. Bin Laden promotes a message, which resonates with many of his fellow Muslims namely that the presence of U.S. troops and foreign business interests on Middle Eastern soil defames the shrines and geography of the Islamic faith. Islamic hostility to the West has deep historical roots and goes back centuries but these analysts state that American self-interest has propagated Arab world hate. Recently cited American controlled transgressions

include the rise of Western based international organisations, and the establishment of the state of Israel and subsequent policies, which have permitted the expropriation of Arab properties. Various Arab/Islamic leaders use these activities and especially the Israeli occupation of Palestine as a rationale to achieve dictatorial and semi-feudal rule over their subjects. Osama bin Laden, Hamas, the various Hezbollah or holy warrior organizations throughout the region all have flourished in this regard. Assessing the role of bin Laden and Islamic fundamentalism, writer Michael Moran noted in 1998 that bin Laden “is viewed as a hero by millions in the Islamic world,” and even more so by a militant few after the 2001 attacks.

While these two groups of commentators disagree about the cause and effect of extremist Islamism, they both do generally agree that militants and fundamentalists arise from cultural and political dislocations. These dislocations have created an Islamic citizenry of refugees who are vulnerable prey for Muslim fanaticism and religious fundamentalism. The ruthless Taliban regime, for instance, once governing Afghanistan was incubated in the sprawling network of refugee camps along the Pakistan border. Children and adolescent males were indoctrinated to a lethal combination of Koranic verse and teachings about the heroism of political violence and martyrdom. They absorbed the Pan-Islamic goal of regional theocracy as a wall of safety against the corrosive and sinful culture of the West.

Such viewpoints combined with parochial interests, largely feudal governance, fundamentalist religious teaching, and state sponsored terrorism make reconciliation with Western interests difficult to establish. In much of the Arab world religion and the state are inseparable and this makes any rational political brokerage highly improbable. The Arab world does not grasp nor comprehend a liberal value system. Nor do extremists want to grant to Israel its right to exist. The Arab world has never accepted the UN inspired international agreement, which created Israel, nor does it comprehend the democratic—liberal governance that under girds Israeli society and thus necessitates US support. Democracy has never been tried and most Arab governments have long struggled to contain fundamentalist opposition to their regimes. As one expert noted,