

STUDIA ISLAMIKA

INDONESIAN JOURNAL FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES

Volume 5, Number 2, 1998



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STUDIA ISLAMIKA

Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies

Vol. v, no. 2, 1998

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STUDIA ISLAMIKA (ISSN 0215-0492) is a journal published quarterly by the Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN, the State Institute for Islamic Studies) Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta. (STT DEPPEN No. 129/SK/DITJEN/PPG/STT/1976) and sponsored by the Department of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. It specializes in Indonesian Islamic studies, and is intended to communicate original researches and current issues on the subject. This journal warmly welcomes contributions from scholars of related disciplines.

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“The Clash of Civilization”: A Prognosis of the Future or the Lure of the Past

Abstraksi: *Antusiasme respon masyarakat Indonesia terhadap “the Clash of Civilization” Samuel P. Huntington bisa dijelaskan karena dua hal. Pertama, Indonesia adalah negara-bangsa dengan penduduk Muslim terbesar di dunia. Islam—sebagai faktor peradaban yang menjadi basis analisa dalam tesis tersebut— sudah barang tentu membentuk kesadaran umat dan, dengan sendirinya, menarik minat sebagian besar kalangan masyarakat Indonesia. Kedua, sifat provokatif yang dikandung tesis itu telah mengundang masyarakat untuk menyikapi secara hati-hati prognosis-prognosis politik yang bakal terjadi di Indonesia sendiri. Apalagi tesis Huntington dimunculkan di tengah bertiupnya angin politik Indonesia yang memberi tempat bagi Islam pada awal dekade 1990an.*

Tulisan yang juga bisa dipandang sebagai salah satu respon terhadap tesis the Clash of Civilization ini ingin menguji kembali kecermatan analisis Huntington dalam konteks keunikan Islam di Indonesia.

Teori the Clash of Civilization dipresentasikan Samuel Huntington pertama kali pada musim panas 1993. Ia berpendapat, berakhirnya Perang Dingin dan berjayanya kapitalisme sebagai ideologi yang mengalahkan sosialisme, telah membuka babak baru sejarah manusia dengan munculnya suatu bentuk konflik baru—bukan konflik antar negara yang berkaitan dengan kepentingan ekonomi dan perbatasan wilayah, melainkan konflik antar “peradaban”. Di dalam konflik baru ini, negara-negara di dunia berlomba memenangkan keunggulan baru pula, keunggulan legitimasi dan kebenaran kultural. Dari sini, Huntington berkesimpulan bahwa di masa depan identitas kultural adalah hal paling menentukan jalannya politik global.

Identitas ini tampaknya akan membentuk pola kohesi, disintegrasi, dan konflik antar bangsa di era baru. Begitu pula, kebijakan-kebijakan politik dan ekonomi negara-negara di dunia juga dibangun berdasarkan garis pemisah kebudayaan antar-negara, dan lebih utama lagi, berdasarkan identitas peradaban besar dunia: Barat, Kristen Ortodox, Islam, Amerika Latin, Hindu, Cina, Jepang dan Afrika. Mengikuti kesimpulan ini Huntington melihat kecenderungan negara-negara di Asia yang memiliki persepsi berbeda—dan pada tingkat tertentu konflik—dalam hal-hal yang selama ini dipandang universal oleh Barat-Kristen, seperti demokrasi, HAM dan kesetaraan laki-laki-perempuan.

Reaksi bermunculan menanggapi cermat-tidaknya tesis itu diterapkan untuk melihat peta peradaban bangsa-bangsa di dunia. Tak terkecuali kalangan masyarakat akademik Indonesia. Pertanyaan yang diajukan adalah, mungkinkah seseorang bisa menggambar "peta peradaban" bagi bangsa-bangsa di dunia berdasarkan asumsi "Clash"? Jika mungkin, bagaimana seseorang akan memukul rata peradaban Islam yang berkembang di Timur Tengah, dengan peradaban yang tumbuh di kalangan masyarakat Muslim Asia Tenggara? Ataukah, tesis benturan peradaban itu sesungguhnya tidak lebih dari retorika politik yang digali dari masa lalu, ketika konflik antar masyarakat seringkali juga muncul dalam bentuk perang antar-agama?

Dengan demikian, kelemahan hakiki dari analisis Huntington—sebagaimana dikemukakan para pengkritik dari Indonesia—adalah generalisasi atas peradaban-peradaban itu untuk diterapkan kepada "negara-negara" tertentu. Asumsi Huntington dalam memetakan "peradaban Islam" pada Arab Saudi, Iran dan Afghanistan untuk menunjukkan oposisi mereka terhadap universalitas HAM dan demokrasi, atau juga "peradaban Konfusius" pada Cina komunis, telah membawanya pada kesimpulan yang mengingkari konteks internal negara-negara itu. Jika perjuangan menegakkan HAM dan demokrasi dari masyarakat di negara-negara tertentu kelihatan melawan pemerintah, maka "clash" yang sebenarnya terjadi bukanlah benturan konsep HAM antara peradaban Barat-Kristen dengan peradaban Islam, melainkan suatu benturan antara pemerintahan Muslim yang tidak demokratis dengan masyarakat yang dipimpinnya; atau konflik antara pemerintah Komunis Cina yang anti demokrasi dengan masyarakat pro demokrasi. Dalam kerangka ini, peta peradaban yang dibuat Huntington mengingkari keunikan peradaban-peradaban itu pada tingkat lokalitas; peradaban jauh lebih kompleks dari sekedar persoalan-persoalan politik dan keamanan.

"اصطدام الحضارات": تنبؤ بالمستقبل أم إطلال على الماضي

خلاصة: ان الحماسة التي يستجيب بها المجتمع الاندونيسي لنظرية سامويل هانتينجتون (Samuel P. Huntington) عن اصطدام الحضارات يمكن تبريرها بأمرين: أولهما أن اندونيسيا دولة وشعب يمثل سكانها أكبر المسلمين عددا في العالم. والاسلام كعامل حضاري تنطلق منه تحليلات تلك النظرية، والذي هو كامن بالطبع في عمق اللاشعور للامة، يستجلب بالضرورة اهتمام الغالبية العظمى من المجتمع الاندونيسي إلى الحديث عن تلك النظرية؛ وثانيهما أن النظرية بطبيعتها "الاستفزازية" قد أثارت المجتمع إلى اتخاذ موقف حذر إزاء التنبؤات السياسية التي ظهرت في اندونيسيا نفسها، علاوة على أن النظرية روجت في الوقت الذي اتجهت فيه السياسة الاندونيسية منذ أوائل التسعينيات إلى إعطاء الاسلام مكانة للمشاركة السياسية.

وهذه المقالة التي نحن بصدد تلخيصها والتي يمكن اعتبارها أيضا موقفا من المواقف إزاء فكرة اصطدام الحضارات تريد التحقيق فيما إذا

كانت التحليلات التي يقوم بها هانتينجتون دقيقة بالنسبة لاندونيسيا بالذات أم لا.

لقد عرض هانتينجتون نظريته لأول مرة في صيف ١٩٩٣م، وكان يرى أنه بانتهاء الحرب الباردة وبقاء الرأسمالية متفوقة على الاشتراكية، أقبل التاريخ البشرى على مرحلة من الصراع فى صورته الجديدة، وهو ليس صراعا بين الدول والشعوب حول المصالح الاقتصادية والحدود الجغرافية، بل هو صراع بين الحضارات حيث تتنافس الدول فى العالم على الفوز بتفوق جديد هو التفوق الشرعي وتفوق الحقائق الثقافية.

ومن هنا يخلص هانتينجتون إلى أن الهوية الثقافية تمثل أهم العوامل الحاسمة فى مسيرة السياسة العالمية مستقبلا، وهي هوية ستحدد فيما يبدو أساس التماسك أو التفتت أو الصراع بين الشعوب فى العصر الجديد. والأمر كذلك بالنسبة للتدابير التى تتخذها الدول فى مجال السياسة والاقتصاد بناء على الحدود الفاصلة بين الثقافات، وخاصة بين الحضارات الكبرى فى العالم: المسيحية والكاثوليكية والاسلامية والهندوسية والبوذية والصينية والافريقية. وتظهر تبعا لذلك مؤشرة لنزوع الدول الآسيوية إلى تبنى تصورات مختلفة - وعلى مستوى معين من الصراع - حول القضايا التى ظل الغرب المسيحي يعتبرها عالمية مثل الديمقراطية وحقوق الانسان والمساواة.

لقد ظهرت ردود فعل واسعة تتساءل عما إذا كانت النظرية دقيقة إذا ما طبقت للنظر فى خريطة الحضارات فى العالم، بما فى ذلك الأوساط الأكاديمية باندونيسيا. والسؤال المطروح هو هل يصح لأحد أن يصور "خريطة الحضارات" للشعوب فى العالم بناء على افتراض "الاصطدام"؟ وإذا

كان ذلك ممكنا فهل يستطيع أحد أن ينظر إلى الحضارة الاسلامية نظرة واحدة بين ما ظهرت منها فى الشرق الأوسط وبين ما تشهد تطورا لدى المجتمعات الاسلامية بجنوب شرقي آسيا؟ أم أن الاصطدام الذى افترضته النظرية فى الحقيقة لا يعدو أن يكون دعوى سياسية مقتلعة من فتنة الماضى حيث كان الصراع بين المجتمعات كثيرا ما يظهر فى صورة حروب بين الأديان؟

وهكذا، فإن العجز الحقيقى الذى تتضمنه نظرية هانتينجتون - كما عرضه النقاد الاندونيسيون - هو تعميمه النظرية لتنتطبق على دول معينة. فافتراضه القائم على اعتبار "الحضارة الاسلامية" متمثلة فى كل من المملكة العربية السعودية وإيران وأفغانستان، وكذلك "الحضارة الكونفوشية" فى الصين الشيوعية ليدل بذلك على معارضتها لعالمية الديمقراطية وحقوق الانسان قد أفضى به إلى نتيجة تنتكر للإطار الداخلى لتلك الدول. والحق أنه إذا ما حاول المجتمع فى تلك الدول أن يقيم الديمقراطية ويحترم حقوق الانسان ثم يتعرض فى سبيل ذلك للاصطدام مع الحكومة القائمة فذلك لا يعنى اصطدام الحضارة الاسلامية الغربية مع الحضارة الاسلامية بقدر ما هو اصطدام الحكومة التى لا تؤمن بالديموقراطية مع المجتمع الذى تحكمه؛ واصطدام الحكومة الصينية الشيوعية التى تتخذ موقفا ضد الديمقراطية مع المجتمع الذى يؤيد الديمقراطية. وفى هذا الصدد ظهرت خريطة الحضارات التى تصورها هانتينجتون تنتكر فى النهاية لخصوصية الحضارات فى مستواها المحلى؛ ولا غرو فإن الحضارة أكثر تعقيدا من أن تكون مجرد قضايا سياسية وأمنية.

The story begins when Samuel P. Huntington—the famous political scientist from the highly prestigious Harvard University, and a citizen of the most powerful nation on earth—writes an article, entitled “The Clash of Civilization?” in *Foreign Affairs*.¹ Soon enough the article invites highly critical comments from several scholars.² Not someone who can easily be discarded, Huntington gives his response to his critics by asking a challenging question, “If Not Civilizations, What?”. If anything the criticisms only harden his conviction that civilization, instead of ideology, economy or whatever, would become the basis of conflict in the Post Cold War period.³ He does not stop with this rather cynical question, he writes a book with the same subject and title, but without a question mark.⁴ Huntington, “the seeker”, has in the meantime become the “true believer”—as Eric Hoffer would have called him. He also defends his position in several interviews he gives after the publication of the book.

The main theses of Huntington have by now become widely known. *The Clash of Civilization* is a very comprehensive and well-planned book. Any attempt to summarize it would not do justice to the subtleties of the book’s arguments. Anyway the book, like the article, starts from a thesis that the end of the Cold War has brought with it a change in the character of global politics. It is now multicivilizational and it is also multipolar. There are seven (or possibly eight) contemporary civilizations—Western, Orthodox, Latin American, Sinic, Hindu, Islamic, Japan, and (possibly) African civilizations. Societies sharing cultural affinities cooperate with each other and group themselves politically under the leadership of the “core state” of their respective civilizations.

Relations between states belonging to the same civilization are closer than the relationship among states from different civilizations. Inter-civilizational relationships can have varying degrees of conflict. While the relationship between Islamic and Western civilizations is a conflictual relationship, that between Western Civilization and the Latin American civilization is less conflictual. Actually, Huntington tends to suggest that the relationships between the Islamic civilization and other civilizations also vary in terms of the degree of conflict, even though he also foresees the strong possibility that the Islamic and the Sinic civilizations would form an alliance in their opposition to the West.

Although the West has been the dominant driving force in the

process of modernization of the world, it cannot Westernize the non-Western societies. Since the end of the Cold War that Western civilization has begun to decline, while the Asian civilizations, on the other hand, have economically, militarily and politically been expanding. Non-Western civilizations have begun to reaffirm the intrinsic excellence of their civilizations. The strengthening of the civilizational identities particularly occurs in the "fault line" of conflict. This tendency is most prevalent among the Muslims, whose demographic explosion destabilizes the multicivilizational world. However, "the greatest threats to world peace", according to him, are "the conflicts generated by Western universalism, Muslim militancy, and Chinese assertion". The West, therefore, should be aware of the growing power of anti-Western Islamic fundamentalism and should deter the emergence of an anti-Western Islamic-Sinic alliance system.

A real danger to Western civilization, however, resides in its own core state, the United States, where people begin to entertain the idea of the United States being a multicultural nation. This idea is tantamount to transforming the United States into a United Nations and to the rejection of the very foundation of Western civilization. "Multiculturalism at home", he says, "threatens the US and the West; universalism abroad threatens the West and the world. Both deny the uniqueness of the West".

In spite of the rigor of Huntington's arguments, several scholars and intellectuals have seriously questioned the academic validity of his list of major contemporary civilizations, his model of using civilizations as the paradigm to understand and predict post Cold War global politics, and his rather apocalyptic prognosis about the future. Some scholars find it rather strange to see that Huntington does not pay enough attention to the roles of science, technology, economy and even popular culture. "How can world peace be maintained", Janadas Devan asks, "if the most important material elements of every modern culture— science, technology and production— are sacrificed on the altar of cultural exclusivities?"⁶ Others seriously question Huntington's refusal to acknowledge the important roles played by several kinds of regional economic and political organizations in reducing conflict and enhancing international cooperation. One reviewer asks a seemingly simple question, "If other civilizations have been around for centuries why are they posing a challenge only now?"⁷ To put it differently he, like some other reviewers, is wondering how

come Huntington who has constructed his “civilizations” from his understanding of history forgets the internal historical dynamics of civilization. He “has found his civilizations whole and intact, watertight under an eternal sky”, Fouad Ajami says.

When Huntington flatly rejects Ajami’s challenging dictum, “civilizations do not control states, states control civilizations”⁸ he does not only show his understanding of history, but also his cultural determinism. The article and the book illustrate how this cultural attitude can easily entrap him into his own cultural and political prejudices in dealing with other civilizations. In the event, how can he avoid the danger of being allured by the ever convenient Proscutean bed? It is perhaps not too difficult to find loopholes and weaknesses in Huntington’s major design. After all, as a young Indonesian intellectual says, Huntington might have fallen into the slippery trap of his “grand narrative”. It fails to explain the intricate and complex nature of inter-civilizational relationship.⁹

It is fair enough for Huntington to defend the sanctity of Western civilization. His descriptions and opinions on other civilizations, particularly on Islam, clearly reveal how deeply he is in debt to the tradition rightly called by Edward Said “orientalism”—that is an “ideology” in the form of knowledge about Islam that emerges from confrontation, domination and cultural antipathy.” He also demonstrates the validity of Spurr’s finding on the continuing influence of “the rhetoric of empire” even in the academic discourse.¹¹ Huntington’s “covering of Islam”, as Said would have said, “is not interpretation in the genuine sense but an assertion of power”.¹² Who then would wonder if Huntington’s book is in more than one way also a warning to the Western world, “Beware the threat of Islam”.

In spite of the highly complex problems that it tries to discuss, Huntington’s book is pleasant to read. It is well written and occasionally adorned by light humor and challenging dictum and well-thought aphorisms. As a matter of taste the book can easily pass as a romantic political thriller—well designed, excellent plot, packed with actions and crowded by many actors, good and bad, without ever forgetting who the real hero is and what stake is to be taken care of. Although Huntington begins by using an historical approach in constructing the stage of the plots he is about to tell—the seven or eight civilizations—his time dimension becomes flat when he begins to narrate the story itself. His empirical data is largely derived from contemporary political affairs—something any well planned thriller

used to apply in constructing its imaginary plots. Like any other well designed thriller, the book can also invite the creative imagination of its readers. What would the climax of the story be if the reader, instead of the author, was to write it? In the event one cannot simply dismiss what is being imagined by the reader as less credible and coherent than, and certainly not as more subjective than what has been written by the author.

The attempt to acquire the relative freedom to participate in the process of creation, albeit only in one's own imagination, is not only a way to get into the messages sent by the author through the intermediary of the text, but also to reduce the impact of the violence of words. And Huntington's words can sometime be quite violent. Not rarely he lets himself be swayed by the impulse to blame the victims. How would one interpret his comments, that "(U)nless a group can do as the Bosnian Muslims did and convincingly portray itself as a victim of genocide and thereby arouse Western sympathy it can only expect to receive significant assistance from its civilizational kin, and apart from the Bosnian Muslims, that has been the case"¹³ The Bosnians have to have the ability to pretend as if their wives are not raped and their children are not killed before they can expect any sympathy from the West and receive assistance from its civilizational kin. The problem is, of course, that the scattered mass graves all over Bosnia Herzegovina are simply too real to be treated as a make believe world.

Therefore, why not, even for a while, avoid the violence of the text? Let's just for a while pretend that it is a thriller to enjoy. What would the climax of a world best seller thriller, called "The Clash of Civilization", be if the reader was allowed to write it? Let's just follow the imaginary plot constructed by Huntington.

The year is 2010. Korea has been re-united. Taiwan has accepted China's suzerainty. The United States has greatly reduced its military presence in Japan and the Far East. That is the time when China finally decides to establish full control over the South China Sea. Vietnam resists and fighting occurs between Chinese and Vietnamese warships. In addition to its strong desire to having a control over the oil-rich scattered small islands, China is also eager to revenge its humiliation in the 1979 war. It launches a full scale aggression at Vietnam, which in fact, like China, also belongs to the Sinic civilization. Facing this massive attack Vietnam appeals to the United States, its former enemy that has become a reliable ally. The United States condemns China's military adventures and asks this core state of the

Sinic civilization to withdraw. Since China ignores this appeal, the United States sends warships to the South China Sea. Unfortunately the ships become easy prey of Chinese submarines. The United States has to be careful in dealing with China, because both powers have nuclear capabilities. It also has to consider domestic public opinion. In the meantime, China has overrun Vietnamese forces and occupies Hanoi.

India, a long time enemy of China, seizes the opportunity to launch a devastating attack on Pakistan. Initially it is quite successful, but soon the military alliance between China, Iran, and Pakistan is activated. India becomes bogged down fighting Iranian and Pakistani troops. Both India and Pakistan appeal to Arab states for support. While Pakistan may appeal on the ground of Islam, India warns the Arab states about the prospect of Iranian dominance in Southwest Asia. The success of China against the United States has in the meantime stimulated major anti-Western movements in the Middle East. Radical Islamic movements manage to bring down pro-Western governments. The West cannot do anything to halt this trend. This apparent Western weakness leads massive Arab attack on Israel. A nuclear warhead explodes outside Marseille. NATO finally joins the war game.

The military successes of China leaves Japan no other choice but to jump on the China bandwagon. Though officially remaining neutral, Japan more often than not yields to China's demands. Japan plays the role of an active neutral player in the game. This situation forces the United States to evacuate all its remnant troops in Japan. Russia, which has rejected China's offer to establish a mutual security pact at the beginning of the war, decides to side with the Western power, under the leadership of the United States. This core state of the Orthodox civilization suspects that China, the core state of the Sinic civilization, can be a great threat to its security and to its territorial integrity. In the quagmire of the conflict between major civilizations the Orthodox Serbs and the Catholic Croats join the bandwagon of their respective core states by attacking Bosnia. Turkey, a "torn country", who wants to be part of Western civilization, despite its thoroughly Islamic character, can no longer stay aloof from the conflict. Two threatening major civilizations are already at its gate.

Control over oil is certainly of central importance to all combatants. Since the Arab countries are already under the domination of Islamic militants, the West becomes increasingly dependent on Rus-

sian, Caucasian and Central Asian sources. This factor leads the West to intensify its effort to enlist Russia on its side and to support Russia in extending its control over the oil-rich Muslim countries to its south.

Whatever way this global war could finally be put to an end and whatever outcome it might bring, the broader long term result would almost certainly be the drastic decline of all major combatants in the war. Since the war has practically devastated China, Korea and Japan, power gradually shifts to the southern hemisphere. In the event Indonesia, which remains neutral, becomes the dominant state. With the guidance of its Australian advisors, Indonesia can shape the course of events from New Zealand on the east to Myanmar and Sri Langka on the west and to Vietnam on the north. Although this trend may presage a future conflict with India and a revived China, the center of world politics moves south.¹⁴

Unlike the previous global wars in modern times, known in history as the first and the second world wars, this one is a civilizational war. Economic and ideological interest have been replaced by civilizational links as the most important bases of the alliance system. Of the seven or eight contemporary civilizations mentioned by Huntington, five are active participants in this imaginary global war. The Australian case is an exception. A Western country, it is willing to give guidance to Indonesia, which in Huntington's classification belongs to the Islamic civilization. This can be explained by the fact that Australia has become a "torn country", which tries to shift its civilizational alignment.¹⁵

Of course this is only an imaginary scenario of the world's future conflict. Huntington himself hastens to add that "(I)f this scenario seems a wildly implausible fantasy to the reader, that is all to the good". By offering this frightening scenario he wants to give credence to his prediction and to provide warnings to the great powers. If a global war does finally take place—something which is "highly improbable but not impossible"—it is going to be a war between civilizations and it is "most likely to involve Muslims on one side and non-Muslim on the other." In the above imaginary scenario of the global war Huntington shows how the military and political adventures of the core state of the Sinic civilization, China, not only gives the opportunity to radical Islamic movements to dominate the pro-West Arab states, but also makes its alliance with the Islamic countries stronger than ever. It is this newly activated alliance that threatens India, the core state of the Hindu civilization. The outcome of

the global war is the near total destruction of several countries from several civilizations—something no one would like to happen. But how to avoid this tragic eventuality?

The imaginary scenario of global war can provide two important lessons for the future. The first is what Huntington calls “*abstention rule*”, that is any core state should refrain from intervening in conflicts that occur in the other civilizations. The second is the “*joint mediation rule*” that the core states should negotiate with each other to contain fault line wars between states or between groups from their civilizations. In other words the West which has for one or two centuries been the dominant power in the world should learn that it is now living in the “multicivilizational, multipolar world”.¹⁷

Let’s just hope the great powers or the core states of the present world civilizations would willingly adhere to these well-thought rules from the world renowned *pundit*. However, one should also realize that the history of the world has blatantly shown how wise words and good advice from the sages or even the prophets repeatedly went unheeded and ignored. Political history is full of stories of conflicts that might have been avoided and of wars that might have been hindered. What then, would happen, after the imaginary global war—“a highly improbable, but not impossible” scenario—is finally put to an end? Power would shift southward and, as Huntington predicts, Indonesia would emerge as a powerful state, simply because it manages to maintain its neutrality. This sprawling archipelagic state, which by then has a population of about 220 million and (if the Indonesian government’s scenario can be taken as a clue) a GNP of over 3000 thousand US dollars and has practically eradicated its poverty, can determine the course of events far beyond the boundaries of the Southeast Asian region. In spite of the fact that Indonesia lies on the periphery of the Islamic world, “far removed from its Arab center”, this country has, nevertheless, every possibility to fill the role of the core state in the Islamic civilization. After all, as Huntington states, along with Egypt, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, it is at the present time a strong contender to become one.¹⁸ If, indeed, this is going to be the case, the Islamic civilization would finally have its own core state.

Huntington does not say this. He may have strong about doubt whether Indonesia can emerge as the core state. He may even refuse to see the possibility of the Islamic civilization ever having its own core state. However, if history can be taken as an idea, one could

certainly ask, "Why shouldn't the future of the Islamic civilization be under the leadership of the Malay race?" In the beginning it was the Arabs who brought the Islamic light to the world. At the peak of Islamic political power, the Persians illuminated the world with their Islamic cultural brilliance, and then, when the Western civilization had awoken from its deep sleep, it was the Turks' turn to continue to carry the torch of Islam. It was so successful that at one time in the 16th century they knocked on the door of Vienna. By the end of the 19th century the Turks' Ottoman Empire was already known as "the sick man of Europe". One century would have passed when finally—if the imaginary scenario can be followed—the southward shift of power gives the Islamic civilization a core state again. The time now belongs to the Malay race.

If the present situation can be taken as an indicator for the future there is no strong reason why Indonesia should be dismissed as the core state of the Islamic civilization after the great global civilizational war that has been imaginatively constructed by Huntington. "An Islamic core state", he says, "has to possess the economic resources, military power, organizational competence and Islamic identity and commitment to provide political and religious leadership to the *ummah*".¹⁹ Huntington may have some doubts about the ability of Indonesia to fulfill the last requirement. Nevertheless, if he asks any Indonesian leader, whoever he or she is, either an Islamic oriented leader or a secular one, he would be surprised to hear how widespread this opinion about the future role of Indonesia in the Islamic world is. The more so because they have been hearing the same sentiment from several prominent modern Islamic thinkers.²⁰ It is true Indonesia is located on the periphery of Islamic center, but then how can one deny the roles of information and communication technologies in reducing the importance of geographical and cultural distances? How about the continuing acceleration of the movement of people? After all the United States, the core state of Western civilization, is located on the periphery of its civilization. The Judeo-Christian creed, the essence of Western civilization, was also not born in this country. Bethlehem is not located in Massachusetts, but somewhere in Asia, in a region encircled by the threatened inherited lands of the Islamic civilization.

The United States to be considered as the core state of the Western civilization because it is the most powerful nation state, why can't Indonesia be the core state of its own civilization after the end

of the imaginary global war? After all, despite Huntington's claim that civilization is "the highest cultural groupings of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species" and its "the biggest 'we'",²¹ in the dynamic of global politics he describes a change of emphasis in the meaning of the concept of civilization takes place. It has gradually become, as Wang Gungwu rightly suggests, "power groupings made up of nation-states and formed either around shared core cultural values or through readiness to cohere in defense of common interest against challenges coming from different cultural systems".²²

Having its own "core state" the Islamic civilization would be able—like the United States in the Western civilization—to put its house in order. "The absence of an Islamic core state", as Huntington states, "is a major contributor to the pervasive internal and external conflicts which characterize Islam. Consciousness without cohesion is a source of weakness to Islam and a source of threat to other civilizations".

With the presence of a "core state" the continuing internal and external conflicts, "which characterize Islam", as Huntington never forgets to remind his readers would surely be gradually terminated. Islamic civilization would not only turn its weakness into its source of strength but would also cease to be a "threat to other civilizations". And, what does it mean for Indonesia? At long last Indonesia would not only participate in, but also take the leadership in "safeguarding world order, based on freedom, eternal peace and social justice". If the fictionalized global war that erupts in the year 2010 lasts, say, about five years, it means that seventy years after it proclaimed its independence (1945) Indonesia finally fulfills one of the promises of its independence, as formulated in the Preamble of its 1945 Constitution.

Is it historical irony or tragedy that continues to befall Indonesia? It could finally proclaim its independence after the atomic bombs destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It fulfills the dreams of its-founding fathers after the (imaginary) global civilizational war brings destruction to the participating countries. As if Indonesia can only take benefit from human tragedy. What a fate for a country whose people are so proud of its desire to maintain peace and harmony.

The Muslims, radical and moderate alike, can still find delight in Huntington's assessment of the state of the Islamic civilization. No matter how they look at themselves in the present multipolar world,

they are now told that the Islamic civilization is actually on a par with the West. More than that they are actually a threat to the other civilizations. Since only the strong can be a threat to others they might be wondering why they still maintain their defensive posture. At long last, after a few centuries living under the shadow of the myth of the long passed Islamic grandeur, an Indian Muslim, who may have to suffer the political threat and humiliation from the emerging power of the radical Hindu political party, a Singaporean Malay, who has to endure being a part of the least successful group in a country that originally belonged to him, a rich Saudi aristocrat who keeps a condominium in London and Paris, and a follower of the betrayed Federation of Islamic Salvation of Algiers, have something they can share together in delight. The dream of returning to the "glorious age" of Islam has apparently become a reality—at least that is how Huntington rates the place of the Islamic civilization in the present multipolar world, albeit in negative trepidation and apprehension, not to say horror.

Is this imaginary prospect a deviation from Huntington's main messages in his controversial book? It may well be that is the case. Certainly it is far beyond his wildest imagination to make the Muslims proud of their civilization. It is also not his intention to make the Indonesians have a strong belief in the future of their country. His main interests are simply to provide a strategic paradigm to understand the present trends—now that the Cold War is over—and to warn the West, particularly the United States, about its unique civilization and about the continuing importance of its role in the new world order, despite its relative economic, military and demographic decline. He, among other things, advises the West to contain the development of the military power of Sinic and Islamic countries, and to stay away from the affairs of other civilizations. Naturally he does not have to remind the Western powers that the alliance system that have been established between one or two Islamic nation states and China is largely due to the pressures of the West.

The book's scholarly pretense notwithstanding, it is also a political trap. By rejecting the validity of internal cultural diversities and conceptually forcing nation states to belong to only one particular civilization, Huntington not only advises his American compatriots to remain loyal to the legacy of their Western civilization but also pushes the Muslims into the fold of the so-called anti-West, Islamic "fundamentalists". By ridiculing Turkey as being a "torn country"

and dismissing the pro-West Arab countries as being undemocratic and authoritarian he can expect these countries and others would finally make their choice and create their "bloody borders".

That is happening now, Huntington says in his book, not without the feeling of satisfaction for what he thinks as the correct assessment he has already made in his controversial article on the same subject.²⁴ That would also be the future of the multipolar world. In his rather bleak vision of the future Huntington, as his imaginary global war suggests, tends to see the clash between Islamic and Western civilizations as a possibility that cannot be discounted. A conflict that takes place outside the direct interests of the two civilizations may ultimately push them to face each other. Is it a prediction or a lure to a self-fulfilling prophesy?

The future global clash is actually a return to the period of *reconquista*, only this time it is the radical Islamic powers, rather than expanding Western powers, that take the initiative. The future of "clash of civilizations" would finally close the circle of history which begins with what an Indian historian, Panikar, calls "the age of Vasco da Gama". What an ending to the cycle that has given the world its unprecedented progress, intensive cultural communication, exploitation and sufferings. The dynamic of the "Age of Extremes", that Hobsbawm talks about, could proceed to its logical conclusion—the destructive clash of civilization—if the United States does not preserve its role as the defender of Western civilization and fails to understand the nature of the multicivilizational world.

One can indeed lament the fact that in a time when the world is trying to shape itself in accordance with the new demands of history, Huntington not only gives his apocalyptic warning, but also insidiously cultivates a culture of hatred. How easy it is to cultivate this kind of culture, particularly if one uses, like Huntington does, a flat time dimensional approach to contemporary events. As it stands now, Huntington is just a voice of the gallant Western warrior defending his presumably threatened civilization against the windmill of his own creation.

Huntington's future is actually the re-creation of the 16th and 17th century world. Just as what he says, "Asia's future is Asia's past". Two centuries have passed since the destructions of glorious Asian kingdoms and a new period is now emerging. A full cycle of history has been completed. A cyclical view of history is a matter of philosophical conviction that can be simply accepted or rejected. There-

fore what is a better response to Huntington's apocalyptic vision of the future and his prediction of the future Islamic-Sinic military alliance than an international seminar on "Islam and Confucianism", held in Malaysia, one of Huntington's genuine "cleft countries"?²⁵ This conference, like other similar conferences, tries to find common ground, when other parties are busy trying to maximize the elements of conflicts.

In spite of Huntington's high reputation his book is not only another example of the continuing Islam-bashing tendencies in the West but also a hindrance to a mutual understanding. His refusal to understand the social-cultural and political predicaments of the Muslim world—the world that has for some centuries suffered humiliation from the West—only shows his unrepentant imperialistic ideological impulses.

End Notes

1. Samuel P. Huntington , " The Clash of Civilization? " *Foreign Affairs*, 72,3 (Summer, 1993) 22-49.
2. Scholars who sent their critical comments are Fouad Ajami, Robert Bartley, L'u Binyan, Albert Weeks, Jeane J.Kirkpatrick, Kishore Mahbubani. *Foreign Affairs* 72,4 (Sept/Oct.), 1993 . An Indonesian journal on Islamic and cultural studies, *Ulumul Qur'an* also dedicated its December 1993 issue to Huntington's theses.
3. Samuel P. Huntington, "Response, If Not Civilization What? Paradigms of the Post-Cold War World", *Foreign Affairs*, 72,5, (Nov./Dec.) , 1993, 186-194.
4. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.
5. Huntington, *op.cit.* 318.
6. Janadas Devan," Surviving Cultural Differences: Huntington's Vision of an Inevitable Clash of Civilization Ignores What's Happening in Science, Economics, Technology and Popular Culture", *The Business Times*, January 9, 1997.
7. Amy B Sayoo, "Latent Contests of Culture Rising " *Jakarta Post*, April 6,1997.
8. *Foreign Affairs*, 72, 4, (Sept./Oct.), 1972, 9.
9. Sjaiful Muzani, *Ulumul Qur'an*, December, 1993.
10. See, Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon Book, 1979.
11. David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire : Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*, Durham & London . Duke University Press, 1993.
12. Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1981.
13. Huntington, *op, cit.* 268
14. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1996, 313-316.
15. *Ibid.* 151-154.
16. *Ibid.* 321.
17. *Ibid.* 316
18. *Ibid.* 177-178
19. *Ibid.* 177
20. As early as 1949 an Islamic thinker from Algiers, Malek Bennabi, states, " The Muslim world, doubly polarized also now seems to yield to the attraction of Jakarta rather than of Cairo or Damascus. This transfer to an Asian phase implies for its psychological, cultural, moral, social and political consequences that would govern its present as well as its future, primarily in the formation of a collective will" See his *Islam in History and Society* (translated by Asma Rashid from French), Kuala Lumpur :Berita Publishing, 1991, pp. 109-110. (Reprinted) Bennabi's prediction may well be based on his speculation on Islamic historical trends, but see also Fazlur Rahman's assessment that he made after looking at the development of Islam in Indonesia in the 1970s. See his *Islam & Modernity; Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984, 125-129. The translated version of the book is widely read by young Indonesian Muslim intellectuals.
21. Huntington, *op. cit.* 43.
22. Wang Gungwu, "A Machiavelli for Our Times", *The National Interest*, 46, Winter, 1996/1997
23. Huntington, *op.cit.* 177.

24. Samuel P. Huntington, "Clash of Civilizations?", *Foreign Affairs*, 72, 2 (Summer) 1973, 22-49.
- 25 The international Seminar on "Islam and Confucianism; A Civilizational Dialogue" held by the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, March 16 -17, 1995. Prof. Tu Wei -Ming from Harvard University ventures to give a list of "common areas for interaction" between Islamic and Sinic civilizations -community-orientedness, belief in one's destiny *taqdir and ming*; traditional sage-king and warrior leader; emphasis on man's potential for goodness, detailed rule of behavior, *The Straits Times*, Saturday, March 18,1995.

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