

Clash of Civilizations without Civilizational Groups: Revisiting Samuel P. Huntington's Clash of Civilizations Theory

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Abstract : This paper offers a critique of Samuel P. Huntington's Clash of Civilizations thesis. The overriding argument is that Huntington's thesis is characterized by failure to distinguish between 'groups' and 'categories'. Multinational civilizations overcoming their internal collective action problems, which would enable them to pursue a unified strategy vis-à-vis the West, is a rather foundational assumption in his theory. Without assigning sufficient intellectual attention to the processes through which multinational civilizations may gain the capacity for concerted action, i.e., become a group, he contended that the post-cold-war world would be shaped in large measure by interactions among seven or eight major civilizations. Thus, failure in providing a convincing analysis of multi-national civilizations' transition from categories to groups is a significant weakness in Huntington's clash theory. It is also suggested that so-called Islamic terrorism and the war on terror is not to be taken as an expression of the presence of clash between a Western and an Islamic civilization, as terrorist organizations would be superfluous in a world characterized by clash of civilizations. Consequences of multinational civilizations becoming a group are discussed in relation to contemporary Western superiority.

Keywords : clash of civilizations, groups, categories, groupism

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