



In addition, the assertion that conflict is solely the product of civilizational angst is also problematic. In particular, the characterization of a clash between the West and Islam can be seen as a collision between the 'extreme' elements of Western and Islamic identities. The West is neither a unified entity nor antithetical to Islam.<sup>9</sup> Islam's evolution over time, and its ability to creatively meet challenges has also been neglected in Western public discourse. At the same time, Western culture has sometimes been portrayed in superficial terms in the news media of many Muslim states. The "clash of civilizations" explanation also fails to recognize the hybridity between Western and other civilizations. For instance, while some diaspora communities in Western societies may incorporate outward symbols of Westernization, they may retain elements of 'older' cultures.

The "clash of civilizations" can also be seen as an incorrect label for other forms of conflict. In particular, Huntington may have been referring to a clash of empires rather than "civilizations". Alternatively, it has been argued that the conflict can be described as a "clash within civilizations," for which two explanations are plausible:

- the "clash within civilizations" is a conflict between different ideologies within Islam, or a "struggle for the soul of Islam"; and
- the "clash within civilizations" is the manifestation of economic globalization and "national, subnational, religious and tribal, particularisms." From this standpoint, September 11th represented the intersection of these competing forces.<sup>10</sup>

However, to others, the "clash of civilizations" theory has been formulated in the context of a "civilized" versus "primitive" discourse. By contrast, the world can increasingly be seen as one global civilization with an increasingly well-grounded foundation in universal human rights and individual liberties.

### **The Roots of Anti-Western Sentiment in Muslim Communities**

Rather than a result of "civilizational" conflict, anti-Western sentiment is the result of a complex, interacting series of "root causes" that must be more carefully analysed by Western policy makers. Nonetheless, considerable disagreement has been expressed over the primary and subsidiary sources of conflict. The antecedents of conflict and anti-Western sentiment can, however, be broadly summarized in three categories: political, religious/cultural, and socio-economic.

#### *Political Causes*

According to this explanation, anti-Western sentiments can be attributed to failings of Western, and more specifically, American foreign policy. Political factors contributing to resentment and alienation include: the perception of the U.S. as a hegemon; the lack of resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; the presence of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia; and the suffering of the Iraqi people resulting from economic sanctions. In addition, the perception that the West holds double standards in foreign policy by supporting authoritarian regimes and military intervention without regard to principles

<sup>9</sup> Mushirul Hasan, "Discussion Paper for Thinkers' Retreat: Clash of Civilizations? (2002): September 9-11 and its Aftermath," available online at: [www.ecommons.net/ccfpd-thinkers2002/main.phtml?section=ottawa&show=hasan](http://www.ecommons.net/ccfpd-thinkers2002/main.phtml?section=ottawa&show=hasan).

<sup>10</sup> Benjamin Barber, keynote presentation for Thinkers' Retreat: Clash of Civilizations? (2002) "Can Democracy Survive the War Against Terrorism?", available in online video at the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development website ([www.cfp-pec.gc.ca](http://www.cfp-pec.gc.ca)); see also Benjamin Barber, *Jihad Vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism are Reshaping the World* (Ballantine Books, 1996).