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The Clash of Civilizations in the Syrian Crisis

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ABSTRACT

The Syrian crisis may be the beginning of a new conflict of civilizations. Ethnic and religious pluralism is clearly evident in this country: Muslims (Sunnis, Druze, Alawites, Shiites and Ismailis); Christians (Orthodox, Catholics, Maronites, Protestants) and Turkmen and Kurdish ethnic minorities. The Syrian crisis of 2011 seemed to go against the ruling elite (Alawis). With the escalation of the conflict, the country gradually became the scene of a civil war characterized by international dimensions. In this way, the conflict became a multilateral battle in which, on the one hand, the participants in it were the local element in the form of the government of Bashar al-Assad and extremist terrorist groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra, ISIL and Ahrar al-Sham; and on the other hand, the United States and its European allies, Saudi Arabia and some States of the Persian Gulf; and Iran and the axis of resistance, as well as Russia and China. Due to the presence of diverse cultures and religions, it appears that this will make the Syrian crisis a prelude to a renewed clash of civilizations. This research seeks to answer these questions: What are the basic propositions of the theory of the clash of civilizations and how is it represented in the Syrian crisis? Since, according to Samuel Huntington, the main sources of the clash of civilizations are the foundation of civilizations, religious and cultural antecedents, and cultural and religious identities. Consequently, they are expressions of the clash of civilizations: the war on terrorism, the Syrian crisis, the rise of ISIL and the presence of US military and international interventions, the competition of regional and transnational powers.

KEYWORDS: Clash of Civilizations, Syrian Crisis, ISIL, Identity, Samuel Huntington

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El choque de civilizaciones en la crisis Siria

RESUMEN

La crisis Siria puede ser el comienzo de un nuevo conflicto de civilizaciones. El pluralismo étnico y religioso es claramente evidente en este país: Musulmanes (sunitas, drusos, alauitas, chiítas e ismaelitas); Cristianos (ortodoxos, católicos, maronitas, protestantes) y minorías étnicas turcomanas y kurdas. La crisis Siria de 2011 parecía ir en contra de la élite gobernante (alauita). Con la escalada del conflicto, el país se convirtió paulatinamente en escenario de una guerra civil caracterizada con dimensiones internacionales. De esta manera, el conflicto se convirtió en una batalla multilateral en la que, por un lado, los participantes en él eran el elemento local en la forma del gobierno de Bashar al-Assad y grupos terroristas extremistas como Jabhat al-Nusra, ISIL y Ahrar al-Sham; y por otro lado, Estados Unidos y sus aliados europeos, Arabia Saudita y algunos Estados del Golfo Pérsico; e Irán y el eje de la resistencia, así como Rusia y China. Debido a la presencia de diversas culturas y religiones, parece que esto hará de la crisis Siria un preludio de un renovado choque de civilizaciones. La presente investigación busca dar respuesta a estas preguntas: ¿Cuáles son las proposiciones básicas de la teoría del choque de civilizaciones y cómo se representa en la crisis Siria? Dado que, según Samuel Huntington, la principal fuente del choque de civilizaciones son la fundación de civilizaciones, los antecedentes religiosos y culturales y las identidades culturales y religiosas. En consecuencia, son expresiones del choque de civilizaciones: la guerra contra el terrorismo, la crisis Siria, el surgimiento del EIIL y la presencia de las intervenciones militares e internacionales de Estados Unidos, la competencia de potencias regionales y transnacionales.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Choque de civilizaciones, crisis Siria, EIIL, identidad, Samuel Huntington

Introduction

Huntington's (1993, 1996) argument for explaining the theory of "clash of civilizations" is based on the facets of conflicts and contradictions between civilizations and these conflicts and contradictions are important to the diversity of political ideologies. Today, with the e of the phenomenon of globalization, we witness the world's nascent and expanding relations between nations belonging to different civilizations. It is in this regard that there arises a need to pay attention to the issue of civilization diversity and emphasis to understanding the means of differentiating and sharing elements of various civilizations. In

fact, civilization is in the realm of culture and in other words, it has a cultural burden. Civilization involves objective elements including language, history, religion, and traditions, and mental elements such as internal structure. All civilizations are dynamic and have the ability to climb, fall, and transform. In this regard, the main focus of the confrontation between countries and civilizations is not only the political or economic and social nature but also the main cause of the clash of civilizations which, according to Samuel Huntington, are the cultural factors. Huntington believes that cultural attributes cannot be ignored; therefore, the main cause of civil disputes, are cultural differences. Otherwise, there are identity and cultural differences that inevitably clash civilizations.

In the same context, Huntington believes that the present age is the era of a plethora of civilizations and given the decline of Western civilization and orthodoxy, along with the growth of East Asian, African, Hindu and, of course, Muslim, clashes between all civilizations are likely to mark this current era. He believes that civilizations are human tribes and that the clash of civilizations is a kind of tribal conflict on a global level. He calls the relationship between groups of various civilizations cold and non-sincere and even hostile and he believes that hope for the partnership between civilizations is hopeless. In particular, his argument is that the relationship between Islam and Christianity, and Islam and the West, are often overwhelming and have considered each other as strangers and invaders. And in the near future, two civilizations that can conflict with each other are Islamic civilization and Christian or Western civilization (Mansour, 2001).

Looking at the developments in the Middle East, especially after the "Islamic awakening" and the crises in Syria and Iraq, it can be safely said that the theory of the clash of civilizations, in the context of explaining international relations and civilizational conflicts between the West and Islam has been made noticeable. As acknowledged by most experts and researchers in the field of international politics, Syria is a starting point of a new phase of conflict between the two Western and Islamic civilizations and this country also serves as the focus of the formation of regional and even new international orders. In this crisis, the actors belonging to different civilizations are involved; on one hand, there is the government of Bashar

al-Assad, terrorist groups like Jabhat al-Nusra, ISIL and Ahrar al-Sham and on other hand, the United States and its European allies, Saudi Arabia and some Persian Gulf States, and Iran and the axis of resistance, as well as Russia and China.

Accordingly, given the presence of various cultures and religions, it seems that this will make the Syrian crisis a prelude to a renewed clash of civilizations. So, the present research seeks to answer these questions: What are the basic propositions of the theory of the clash of civilizations and how is it represented in the Syrian crisis? Since according to Samuel Huntington, the foundation of civilizations, religious and cultural backgrounds, and cultural and religious identities are the main source of the clash of civilizations; Therefore, the war on terrorism, the Syrian crisis, the emergence of ISIL and the presence of the US military and international interventions, the competition of regional and trans-national powers, is a manifestation of the clash of civilizations.

1. The theory of the clash of civilizations

The theory of "clash of civilizations" was born in 1993, with the publication of an article in the "Foreign Policy" journal by Samuel Huntington. In fact, this theory was introduced with the aim of explaining the new world order in the post-Cold War era. During the Cold War, disputes and conflicts among societies were assessed on the basis of ideological rivalries between the East and West blocs; But after the end of the bipolar system and the emergence of a United States-led monopoly system, developments in the international system arose from ethnic and religious conflicts and tensions in different parts of the world. In this regard, the fundamental principle of Huntington's theory was based on the distinction between different nations, not political and economic, but based on cultural distinctions. On the other hand, new patterns of conflict between societies occur in the field of cultural affairs, and not merely limited to competitive patterns in the political and economic arena. In this context, Huntington noted: The main source of conflict in this new world is not ideological or often economic. The widespread division of humanity and the resources governing the war will be cultural. The nation-states will remain the main and powerful actors in the international

system, but major conflicts occur among international actors and different groups of civilizations and the clash of civilizations will dominate global politics (Huntington, 1993).

Thus, the main components of Huntington's view can be summarized as follows:

1) New identities, such as Islamic fundamentalism, have a cultural nature derived from the formation of "consciousness of civilization" and this exacerbates the irreconcilable contradictions of civilizations.

2) People are discovering a new identity, but at the same time, their own, in which the ideological-civilizational struggles play a pivotal role.

3) The two Islamic and Confucian cultures are the cultures that challenge the civilization of the West and can see the tensions and conflicts about their civilization lines with the West, the spheres, or the fault lines of tension and conflict.

4) The existence of a similar and almost complete system of values and beliefs within each civilization, enhance their equipped feature and cannot see serious conflicts between countries belonging to a civilization.

5) The capacity of Islam as an ideological system in determining political behaviors and actions for the establishment of organizational and identity structures (Ashraf Nazari and Ghanbari, 2013).

In the same regard, Huntington classifies the world into the eight main civilizations that, in order to better explain the research issue, in the map of the distribution of civilizations all over the world from his perspective, after the divisions of civilization are observed:

1) Chinese Civilization: Common Chinese Culture and Chinese Communities in Southeast Asia: Vietnam and Korea [Korean Peninsula]

2) Japanese civilization: Japan's culture is distinctly different from other parts of Asia.

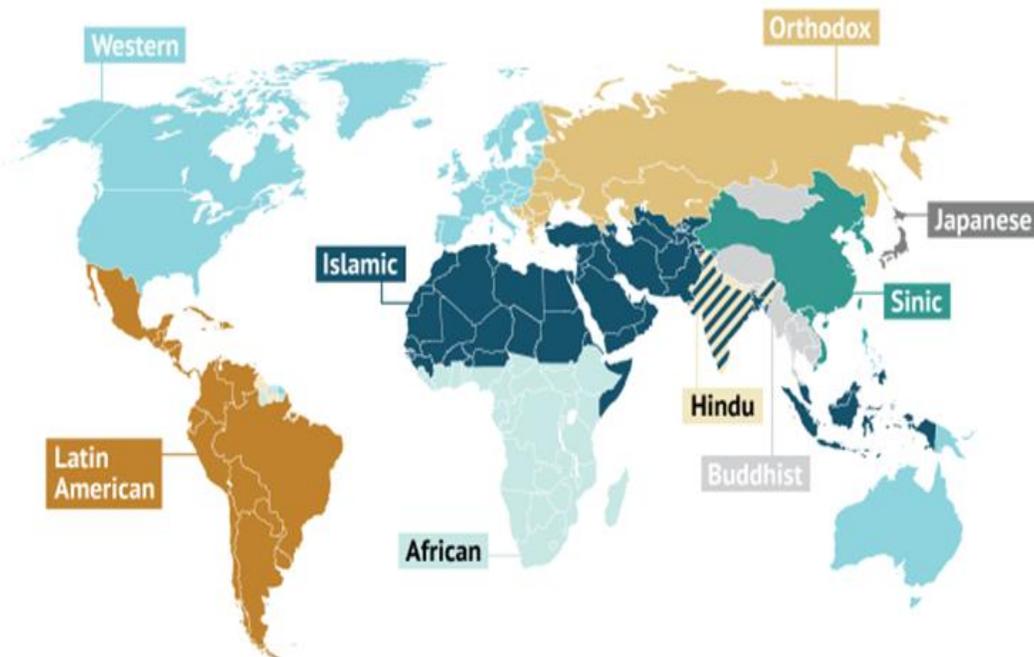
3) Hindu and Buddhism civilization: It is known as India's main civilization.

4) Islamic Civilization: Origin of the Arabian Peninsula, which spread across northern Africa, the Balkans, and Central Asia, and Arabic, Turkish, Farsi, and Malay, including various different subsets within Islam.

- 5) Orthodox civilization [Slavic]: It is Russian-oriented and different from other Western Christians.
- 6) Western civilization includes Central Europe and North America.
- 7) Latin American Civilization: are Central and South American countries with an authoritarian culture and a Catholic majority.
- 8) African Civilization: While the Continent does not have a Pan African identity, Huntington claims that Africans are increasingly experiencing African identity (Huntington, 1996) but, it is considered to be probable. Because it still lacks the standards used to name civilization.

HUNTINGTON'S CIVILIZATIONAL DIVIDES

Samuel Huntington categorized the world into nine civilizations, arguing that the fault lines between them would shape international relations and serve as the driving force of conflict in the post-Cold War world.



Source: *The Clash of Civilizations*

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Thus, the theory of the clash of civilizations is based on two principles: First, in the next world, the main conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims [the confrontation between

the civilization of Islam and the West] and second, the United States does not involve itself in the conflicts of other civilizations, but in controlling these conflicts through negotiation. US attack on the Taliban regime, al-Qaeda, bin Laden, ISIL and its involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the Middle East crises (Hakimipur, 2014), explains this angle of observation.

According to Huntington, there are five main reasons for the inevitability of the encounter between Islamic and Western civilizations:

1) The Muslim population is growing while producing a large number of unemployed and unhappy youth. This unemployment will be a factor in putting pressure on neighboring states and ultimately to migrate to the West.

2) The resurrection of Muslims will give them renewed confidence; it is because of its distinctive features and their civilization values compared to Western civilization.

3) The simultaneous effort of the West to globalize its values and laws and maintain military-economic supremacy and intervention in the disputes of the Muslim world has created grave discontent among Muslims.

4) The collapse of the Soviet Union destroyed the common enemy of Islam and the West and allowed them to imagine each other as a threat to each other.

5) Increasing the relationship between Muslims and the West simultaneously threatens a new sense of identity and its difference with another (Vosoughi, Safari: 2014).

Therefore, Huntington believes that the confrontation between civilizations is the dominant global policy and the last stage in the evolution of the conflicts of our time. According to him, the propositions that will lead to this confrontation are: The fundamental differences between civilizations; Civilization's self-awareness is on the rise; Religious revival, a means to fill the vacuum identity is growing; Dual behavior of the West has raised the self-awareness of civilization (others); Characteristics and cultural differences, are immutable; Economic regionalism and the role of cultural commonalities are growing; Lines of fault between today's civilizations; Replacement of political and ideological frontiers of the Cold War era and these lines are the sparks of a crisis and bleeding and The 1400-year-old hostility of the West and Islam is on the rise and relations between these two civilizations are pregnant

with bloody incidents (Mohammadi, 2008) that a prominent example emerged in recent years in the Syrian crisis (2011- present). In the following headings, we will explain the theory of the clash of civilizations in the Syrian conflicts. But before addressing it, it is necessary to examine this theory in the Middle East and then examine the developments in Syria.

2. The Middle East and Religious and Cultural Identities

The Middle East region, due to its geopolitical importance over the past years has always been the focus of attention of foreign governments and colonial powers. Today, this area because of its strategic and its geopolitical location and political situation, an important element influencing on international equations is considered (Jomee'i, 2009). This area has always been a sphere of influence and conflicts of regional and trans-regional powers and their presence and influence in this area is one of the most important factors, in determining the position of regional and global powers. Therefore, the various factors that make the Middle East more important, it can be called one of the unique sources of energy and the geopolitical and geo-economical privileges of this region. On the other hand, the continuation of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the crisis in Iraq, Lebanon and Syria, Arms race, Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, increasing ethnic and religious gaps, increasing terrorist activity are one of the most important threats in this region. In addition to energy, the issue of security and supremacy of Israel in the region is also a major contributor to insecurity and instability (Akhbari et al., 2011).

In addition, the Middle East has unique features that can be found in lesser regions of the world, in this area, there are six different breeds living side by side. This region is the birthplace of three different religions, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. The traditional culture in the Middle East is basically founded on the principles of the religion of Islam. Another important element that has added importance to the Middle East and has made it an important cultural hub, there are various hometowns including Islamic civilization in this region that is considered as a rival civilization to Western civilization, especially in the liberal Christian civilization ruling Europe and America. Many scholars in Western civilization, including

Huntington, will consider the future of the relationship between these two civilizations in the future of the world.

In this regard, we can mention three very important events that have a significant impact on civilization conflicts in the Middle East:

1) **The fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003:** The pressures of the Zionist lobby and the ideas of "Francis Fukuyama" with the theory of "the end of history" and "Samuel Huntington" with the theory of "clash of civilizations" in characterizing Islam as a serious hostility to Western civilization and the need for a military encounter with the Islamic world from the West for its entrenchment and liberal-capitalist ideology, played a very important role in shaping the new US foreign policy. Therefore, immediately after September 11, 2001, president George W. Bush's interpretation of "Crusade" was introduced to renew the historical memories of the Christian world (Crusades) and using the teachings of Christianity, characterized the military interventions of the USA as that of a savior of humanity and agent of God for the salvation of all people. In addition to the military invasion of Afghanistan, occupation of Iraq as a country that has a high historical, religious and geopolitical position in the Islamic world, could provide a good groundwork for the realization of the goals of international influential groups and lobbies. According to experts and implicit confessions of the US government, protecting Israel and help implement the domination of this country in the region and implementing its expansion plans (New Middle East plan), Control of the widespread and growing influence of Iran on the Islamic world with the physical presence of the United States on the borders of the Islamic Republic, divide the Islamic world into small ethnic groups and Avoiding the formation of a powerful Islamic bloc is one of the primary objectives of the military occupation of Iraq (Mohammadi, 2007).

2) **Presentation of the Great Middle East Project:** With the start of Lebanon's 33-day war in 2006, Condoleezza Rice, US Secretary of State, Hezbollah and Israel's war was called "Labor pain of the birth of the new Middle East" (Naderi, 2014: 133). The Middle East plan seeks to create a balance between intra-regional countries such as Arabs and Israel on one side, making the whole area compatible with the international system, such as the World

Trade Organization and the United States of America on the other. The United States launched the Great Middle East Plan to create a political, social, cultural and economic context in line with its interests in the Middle East (Akhbari et al., 2011).

3) **Syria crisis (2011):** Since 2011, when the country fell into crisis, a new form of conflict has emerged in the Middle East. In the new pattern of conflicts in the Middle East, two categories of countries, according to Huntington, represent two spectra of civilizations juxtaposed to each other. Thus, on one side of the spectrum the supporters of the Syrian government include Iran, Hezbollah and the Iraqi government (the Axis of Resistance) with the strategic cooperation of Russia and China and on the other side, opponents of the Syrian government, the United States, Europe and their regional allies were placed.

Generally, civilizational conflicts in the Middle East and, consequently, the Syrian crisis emerged in both practical and theoretical terms. In fact, theories such as "The End of History" by Francis Fukuyama and "The Clash of Civilization" by Samuel Huntington inevitably lead to a discussion of civilizational confrontations. Because the main concern of these two thinkers, it illustrates the strengthening of the position of Islamic civilization in the coming years. On the other hand, the various scientific actions that Western countries have taken to counter the growth and development of Islamic civilization, especially in the Middle East, due to its strategic location, shows that in recent years, especially after the beginning of the Syrian crisis, the intensity of conflicts between the two Western and Islamic civilizations has increased.

3. Regional and trans-regional competitions

One of the hallmarks of the clash of civilizations in the Middle East is the regional and trans-regional powers' competitions to preserve their domination and influence in the region. Because, in these conflicts, any power that can overcome other powers is, in fact, the dominant power in the Middle East. Since the competition of powers in the form of two western and Islamic civilizations can be interpreted, therefore, according to Huntington's idea, every civilization that wins in this conflict will be the dominant civilization in the region. For

this reason, given the ethnic and religious pluralism of the region, competition within civilization and Huntington's great emphasis on Islamic civilization, establishing a coalition of countries in line with Western interests against the anti-Western countries will be inevitable. Therefore, pushing for the axis of resistance (Iran, Syria, Iraq, Hezbollah, and Hamas) and increasing the arms race and turning Persian Gulf countries into the largest strategic market in the West within the framework of the clash of civilizations (Islam and the West) can be interpreted.

According to international experts, in recent years (especially after the Islamic awakening), the Middle East region (West Asia) has proven prominently Samuel Huntington's theory of the clash of civilizations. In fact, thoughts and opinions of Huntington have maintained their status despite criticism and flaws. As examples of continuing the frequent wars against terrorism (Takfiri and Salafi currents), The Syrian crisis and the emergence of ISIL, the relatively permanent military presence of the United States in the Middle East, Interventions and competitions of regional and trans-regional powers in this region, and so on, suggests to the war between civilizations. It is noteworthy that the Middle East, due to its the geopolitical, geostrategic, and geo-cultural situation, is very important in the international system. Without a doubt, the presence of trans-regional powers such as the United States, the European Union, Russia, and China on the one hand and regional powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, on the other hand, endorses the clash of civilizations and the confrontation between the West and Islam. This is particularly apparent in the Syrian crisis.

In this regard, Huntington, like other contemporary analysts and scholars, perceives the potential confrontation between Western and Islamic civilization as a definitive point in the formation of a new international order. Hence, "Stephen Eric Bronner," wrote in his book "Twentieth Century Political Theory": The multi-hundred-year military confrontation between the West and Islam is unlikely to be reduced. This can be considered more dangerous. In the Persian Gulf War, some Arabs are proud that Saddam Hussein has raided Israel and stands against the West. Also, many Arabs, from the sense of humiliation and the suffering induced by the Western military presence in the Persian Gulf and the obvious weakness of [the Arab

countries], struggle greatly in determining their fate. Developments have taken place in some centers of Arab political systems. The main winners of these developments were Islamic movements. Briefly, in the Arab world, Western democracy strengthens anti-Western forces. This issue may be a transient phenomenon, but it certainly complicates relations between the Islamic countries and the West (Bronner, 2005). Obviously, the components and principles of Huntington's theory were reflected as an official doctrine not only at the regional level but also at the international level.

Therefore, considering Asia and the Middle East as an integral civilization is a fallacy; because it hides the fact that many conflicts in these areas have occurred within civilizations. For this claim, one can cite the different behaviors of some governments; for example, the policies of Saudi Arabia and Egypt are different in guaranteeing their interests compared to Iran and Iraq. Some of these countries tend to interact and others argue with the United States. If the West forms a single bloc in such a situation, Huntington seems to believe that the West will show full unity in the face of the "Islamic threat." (Heilbrunn, 1998). At the same time, following Huntington's theory, when the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq began in 2001 and 2003, confrontation with some groups of actors in the Middle East was on the agenda of the West and the United States. Some of these groups sometimes pursue jurisprudential religious views (Hezbollah and Hamas) but politically pursue almost similar orientations. As the weakening of Western civilization seems to be reflected in the conflicts in the Middle East, US performance (as a symbol of Western civilization) in the global war on terrorism has increased over the past two decades. Thus, it can be said that the fundamental contradictions between Western and Islamic civilizations play an important role in shaping international developments after the Islamic awakening in the Middle East and North Africa. In this sense, the role of regional and trans-regional actors in the Middle East conflicts from Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq to the Horn of Africa: Egypt and Tunisia, Libya and Sudan appear to be the clash of Islamic and Western civilizations.

4. ISIL and the clash of civilizations

Over the past years, especially after the Syrian crisis, the role of radical and terrorist groups, including ISIL, has increased dramatically, and on an ever-increasing scale, its importance in the field of international relations is increasing. ISIL is currently one of the most powerful terrorist groups in the world and is even more violent in using violent methods of al-Qaeda. Moreover, as Huntington claims; new actors of international conflicts are no longer governments, but also are civilizations. He defines this concept as "the main human cultural group" that are known both with objective elements (language, history, religion, adverbs, and institutions) and through the mental elements of individuals. Accordingly, ISIL is an image of this new concept in the international arena.

In the international system, according to Samuel Huntington's view, long conflicts will occur not only between different states but also between different civilizations. In fact, political ideologies or institutions can change, while civilizations based on religion cannot change. ISIL shows this concept by its definition of religious beliefs and cultural values. They also fight with everyone who does not match their cultural qualities. ISIL in this era shows that clashes between non-state actors occur from different civilizations, and national governments are no longer the only main actors. Yet, with the definition of Huntington from civilization, this is also challenged. In fact, although ISIL challenges non-Islamic civilizations, especially the West, but it also fights with institutions (individuals) within Islamic civilization. As a result, ISIL shows the clash of civilizations (Gray, 2014).

The discussions we have had about Huntington's theory of the clash of civilizations in this study, for example, we can see in the current Syrian crisis, and of course we will address this issue in more detail below. Huntington believes that the process of globalization, which has led to the disappearance of political boundaries, on the one hand, it has increased among nations belonging to different civilizations and, on the other hand, has increased the distance between civilizations (Zarean, 2016). The Syrian political system was incapacitated to control a large part of the country, and in this situation, an area was created to ISIL's influence and was provided their more expand (Zarean, 2016). Convenient communication and transportation in the context of globalization and informatization undoubtedly do improve

mutual understanding between different countries, various national societies and civilizations. However, since the governments of nation-states and various social and political forces often wish and can impose propaganda with blocking and distorting effects, combined with the inevitable restrictions and one-sidedness between different nations of different civilizations, such an understanding or mutual understanding cannot be reached full or almost complete (Shi Yinhong, 2019).

In this regard, the representatives of Western civilizations led by the United States of America have fully exploited the situation and tried to infiltrate and maximize their own interests from the crisis. Thus, despite apparent opposition to the issue of terrorism and extremism in the Middle East, but in practice, from ISIL and other extremist groups in order to confront the axis of resistance (Islamic civilization), avoiding the influence of Russia and China in this region (Slavic civilization and Chinese civilization) provides arms and financial support. In this context, Huntington wrote in an article: Islam and the West are in conflict with each other. Islam threatens the West in three directions: politics, civilization, and demographics. In his view, the relationship between Western civilization and Islamic civilization has always been based on a pattern of military conflict and will be. In this regard, Muslims are an invading force, and the borders of Islam are the bloody borders that created with the war (Alipour et al., 2016).

Obviously, Huntington's concern is the Islamic civilization. The main concern of the West is the increasing strength of the Islamist movements and the position of the axis of resistance (Syria and Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas). Therefore, opposition to Islamic civilization is on the agenda of representatives of Western civilization (especially the United States of America). At the same time, we saw that during the conflict between Assad's opponents and supporters, the rivalry between the rival regional powers in Syria and the rivalry of the world powers in this country, the formation and expansion of ISIL territories became more prepared (Alipour et al., 2014). Thus, with the rise of ISIL in Syria, which has been the scene of clashes between Islamic, Western and Slavic civilizations (the arena of conflict between regional and supra-regional powers), the country's internal conflicts have become eroding. This can be

interpreted in the context of the theory of the clash of civilizations; this theory says that a civilization that wins will dominate the most strategic region in the world.

5. The Clash of Civilizations in the Syrian Crisis

Three factors include Syria's position in the Middle East strategic area, the eastern coast of the Mediterranean and neighboring Occupied Palestine, Lebanon, Turkey, and Iraq, it clearly illustrates the geopolitical importance of this country in regional and global relations. Therefore, according to the geopolitical position of Syria, we are witnessing developments in this country becoming an international issue and Turning Syria into a chessboard in the rivalry of regional and trans-regional countries (Dehshiri and Golestan, 2018). Given the international nature of the Syrian crisis, the main reasons for the Syrian situation in the strategies of the regional and trans-regional powers, gives special credence, Include:

1) Syria for historical-strategic reasons, after World War II, has been largely a strategic partner of the former Soviet Union in the Middle East and the Mediterranean, and Russia that is the successor to the former Soviet Union, today, to absorb the Syrian crisis, to maintain its historic character and confronted with United States unilateralism.

2) European countries must be strategically followed by US policies; though slight resistance is shown by some European powers such as France and sometimes Germany, almost all of the reasons for the presence of these countries in the Syrian crisis are similar. Therefore, the United States and Europe can be considered in the same direction.

3) The Islamic Republic of Iran due to Syria's special position in connecting the axis of resistance including Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas and the Palestine Islamic Jihad and Also, considered as a strategic backyard, Because of its vicinity of the borders of the occupied territories (Golan) and Israel as the main enemy of Iran has arrived in the Syrian crisis.

4) Turkey because of the direct impact of Syrian developments on national security and also in order to revive and expand the historical role of the Ottoman Empire in Islamic countries in the form of "new Ottoman's doctrine" has entered this crisis.

5) Given that Sunni Muslims make up the majority in Syria, this same factor prompts Saudi Arabia, which calls itself the center of the ideology of Sunni Islam, seeking to influence Syria. On the other hand, this country (Saudi) can confront its historical and ideological rival, Iran by expanding its influence.

6) The pursuit of becoming a real great power requires active actions in sensitive areas of geopolitical space. The realization of China's economic and security interests inevitably requires the adoption of a strategy of active engagement in global governance. But it seems that if China sets foreign policies in line with global superpower standards like the United States, the risk of a strategic overdraft will increase (Yan Xuetong, 2018). However, despite China's inability to play an effective role like the US or Russia in the process of creating a new regional order in West Asia, China can participate in building the new regional order through the Belt and Road Initiative (and the status of permanent members of the Security Council), especially China is confident that implementing the Belt and Road Initiative will help improve the living standards of people in poor areas of the Middle East and mitigate the negative effects of extreme forces, thereby reducing the root causes of conflicts (Wang Yiwei, 2016). But because of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Support Base in Djibouti put into use in 2017, many other actors believe that China's future interests in the Middle East are not just economic benefits and energy security. As one observer considered:

“Leverage China’s economic power to build a network of new institutions, inspired by new ideas, to pursue new projects that will knit Eurasia, the South Pacific, and Eastern Africa into a tight network of economic, cultural, political, and strategic relationships” (Callahan, 2016).

In addition to the geopolitical factor, the conflict between the interests of regional and trans-regional powers in Syria has led to rivalry between them. Since each of these powers has certain interests and specific strategies in this country and conceptually, they have a unique civilization. Therefore, in the Syrian crisis, we are facing to civilizational conflicts or according to Huntington's "clash of civilizations." In fact, Syria, along with Iran, is one of the components and elements of the resistance axis, and it is through this country (Syria) that Iran

supports the Palestinian jihadist groups and Hezbollah against Israel. Thus, the formation of Syria's internal protests in March 2011, provided the field of foreign intervention and turned this country into a scene of competition and the clash of civilizations known in Huntington's theory. Meanwhile, given the reasons for the presence of regional and trans-regional powers in the Syrian crisis, on the one hand, we can see the main actors of this crisis from the Western, Russian (Slavic), Islamic, and Chinese civilizations that are in competition with each other.

On the other hand, we are witnessing civilization rivalries between the three regional powers of Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia, which requires another study, but here it is just mentioned in order to better explain this issue. In fact, Huntington's emphasis on the theory of the clash of civilizations on Islamic civilization, for example, the United States of America, as the main representative of Western civilization, seeking to weaken the axis of resistance and to this end, welcomes the continuation of the Middle East political and security crises. The axis of resistance consists of an alliance of states and non-state actors in the Middle East that seeks to combat the interests of Western countries, including the United States and Israel; increasing the presence of resistance forces, including Hezbollah, is the main concern of the United States (Vosoughi, Safari, 2016). In fact, the US strategy toward the Middle East (which is the heart of Islamic civilization) is based on the support of traditional dictators, and based on three distinct goals in this area, namely maintaining the security of oil transit, the lack of emergence of new power, and, above all, maintaining the security of the Israel. On this basis, establishing good communication with totalitarian regimes, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the Gulf monarchies has been on the US agenda. On the other hand, the regional dictatorial regimes have played an important role in preserving the "Status Quo" and the unilateral world order.

In the theory of the clash of civilizations, Huntington points out that there is a good link between Islamic civilizations and Confucianism in China, which can challenge the influence and power of Western civilization. China benefits from good relations with the Muslim world. China has good relations with Islamic countries especially Pakistan, Iran. However, there are also disagreements between China and some Islamic countries, and the

concern of Muslims [of the Islamic civilization] is the Muslim Uighurs in China's Xinjiang (Alkan, 2014), especially when mainstream Western media and social networks vigorously criticize China on Uighurs in the context of US-Sino confrontation. Despite these concerns, it must be admitted that China, which in turn represents the Chinese civilization (Confucianism) and Russia (which was neglected in Huntington's theory) as a representative of Slavic civilization, as the civilian conflict entering into the Syrian crisis, it has tried to expand its sphere of influence in West Asia (Middle East) and By communicating closely with countries such as Iran, defines its regional policies in opposition to the interests of the countries representing Western civilization (US and European) and Somehow they have created clash of civilizations. In other words, China, Russia, and Iran, each representing a great international civilization at the international level, by forming a coalition in the Syrian crisis, the interests of the United States and Europe have been overshadowed by the representatives of Western civilization and eventually created a clash of civilization.

Also, Huntington puts forward three major civilizations in the clash of civilizations: West, Islam, and China. The point he neglects is the importance of the orthodox or Russian civilization. Perhaps the collapse of a longtime US rival during the plan of this theory, it has been more than that that he remembers the importance of civilization, such as Russia (namely Huntington assumed that Slavic civilization had collapsed) and putting them alongside Chinese civilization at the forefront of the civilization battle. The two countries of China and Russia, each representing a great civilization in the war of civilizations, in recent years, having entered geopolitical and regional games, and also by trying to expand its sphere of influence in Asia and the Middle East, and by closely co-operation with countries such as Iran and Syria, it has taken regional policies in opposition to the interests of Western civilization especially the United States, and Interpret the perspective of the region and even the world as an East-West and several civilizations. The strong support of China and Russia (and especially Russia) from Syria in the recent crisis, is indicative of the fact that Russia is in no way compromised over its geopolitical interests in the region and This, has put Western civilization in serious problems. What can be seen today from the involvement of civilizational identities in geopolitical zones,

that is, the time for the superiority of Western civilization has come to an end and the three oriental civilizations have come into conflict with Western civilization in a coordinated approach with the unity of the vast front came to battle with the West. These three civilizations (Islamic with the representation of Iran, Orthodox with the Russian representation, and Confucius with the representation of China) are now the rivals of the West of the American-centered civilization and Western civilization is confronting these three civilizations on separate fronts, and seeks to prevent the spread of strategic depth and their sphere of influence in the Middle East and Syria.

Conclusion

Syria's location on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea as a neighbor of Lebanon, Israel, Turkey and Iraq clearly demonstrates the country's geopolitical importance in regional and global relations. However, the conflict in Syria has become an international issue due to its geopolitical focus. The conflict between the interests of regional and trans-regional powers in Syria has led to rivalry between them. Since each of these powers has certain interests and strategies in this country and therefore, in the Syrian crisis, we encounter civilizational conflicts or according to Huntington's "clash of civilizations." Syria and Iran constitute one of the components and elements of the axis of resistance, and in this way supporting the Palestinian jihadi groups, especially Hamas and the Palestine Islamic Jihad, and also Hezbollah against Israel. Thus, the formation of Syria's internal protests in March 2011, provides Foreign Intervention fields and transformed this country into a scene of competition and the clash of civilizations known in Huntington's theory. Due to the issues presented in this study, can be concluded that, in accordance with the theory of the clash of civilizations, In the future, the main conflict is between Muslims and non-Muslims, or the clash of civilization between Islam and the West. Generally, civilizational conflicts in the Middle East and the Syrian crisis became both practical and theoretical. Theoretically, the theories such as "The End of History" by Francis Fukuyama and "The Clash of Civilizations" by Samuel Huntington are inevitably linked to the discussion of civilizations. Because the main concern of the two

thinkers is the strengthening of the position of Islamic civilization in the coming years. On the other hand, the various actions that Western countries have taken to counter the growth and development of Islamic civilization, especially in the Middle East due to its strategic location, including the formation of ISIL, shows that in recent years, especially after the start of the Syrian crisis, the conflict has widened between the two Western and Islamic civilizations. According to this, should be noted Since the according to Samuel Huntington, the foundation of civilizations, religious and cultural backgrounds, and cultural and religious identities are the main source of the clash of civilizations; Therefore, the war on terrorism, the Syrian crisis, the emergence of ISIL and the presence of the US military and international interventions, the competition of regional and trans-national powers, is express the clash of civilizations.

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