Book Reviews


After the end of bipolar World in 1991, two theories were under discussion in order to determine the future setup of the World politics. The first was the ‘End of History’\(^1\) propounded by Francis Fukuyama in 1992, in which he prophesized that the History will be terminated by the global inhalation of the core values of the Western Civilization. He was of the opinion that with the triumph of liberal-capitalism as the only remaining legitimate ideology, the liberation of human kind has been accomplished and the World will be encompassed by a liberal zone of peace, the final and last form of human government. Fukuyama named economic development and the aspiration of individuals to maximize personal freedom as the two mechanisms determining the end of ideological competition, and hence the end of History.

The second theory was also presented in 1992 by Samuel P. Huntington (1927-2008).\(^2\) According to him, in the post-Cold War World, the cultural and religious identities of the people will be the main source of contestation or there will be a clash of civilizations. This theory faced stern critique of various academicians and even by some politicians. Sayyid Muhammad Khatami former president of the Islamic Republic of Iran introduced the theory of dialogue among civilizations. Moreover, the alliance of civilizations initiative was proposed at the 59th General Assembly of the United Nations Organization in 2005 by the then Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and co-sponsored by the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. However, in spite of all these efforts for inter-faith harmony and dialogue, the World instead of confluence of civilizations, has been circumventing the clash of civilizations, especially between the Western and Islamic civilizations.

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In this book, the author, who has written a series of books on this topic, tries to remove misunderstanding and negative image of Islam which took new turn and a burning topic of research and discussion in the West, especially after 9/11. The author also provides adequate information about Islam, especially to the general readers of the West. Besides, an attempt has been made to educate Muslims about the challenges of the modern world and to evolve a strategy of discourse.

The author is of the view that though some so-called representatives of Islam earned bad name for the Muslims and encouraged fundamentalism and extremism in the Muslim societies, but that does not mean that Islam as a religion and a civilization is an enemy of the Western Civilization. The negative perceptions about Muslims in the West further complicate the situation, and unfortunately Western scholars and intellectuals, right from medieval period have been propagating hostility towards Islam and Muslims which, as a reaction, gave birth to hostility for the West and Western Civilization among the Muslim societies. West, especially after 9/11 and 7/7 incidents, regards Islamic fundamentalism as a most dangerous trend, even more threatening than the Communism. The author is of the view that these incidents might be a facet of protest against the wrong Western policies in Palestine, Kashmir, Afghanistan and Iraq. He argues that Western powers usually supported dictators and corrupt Muslim rulers and hardly gave any support to any mass political movement in the Muslim World. At the same time, Western press presented a negative image of Muslims and Islam which deepen the existing mistrust between Muslims and West, and gave birth to prejudices among the people of both civilizations.

Dr Iqbal opines that due to lack of traditional religious norms and virtues in the Western World, the social structure is in crisis and the decline of religion has enhanced the degeneration of human and civilized values. But Islamic norms and values are so high that they can still be a beacon for the temporal and spiritual progress and development of any society. According to Dr Iqbal, Islam, Judaism and Christianity share a common heritage and they can unite on the basis of their main features revealed in the Holy Scriptures. At the same time monotheism can be used as an instrument in unifying the Abrahamic religions on one point, i.e to work for the prosperity of human beings.

According to Dr Iqbal, Islam as a religion of universal values provides moral and spiritual guideline promotes spiritualism, peace and harmony among the different civilizations. He views that the vision of Islam is the vision of progress, prosperity and justice. Qur’an gives intellectual vision of humanity, equality and social welfare. The Prophet launched his mission for
the eradication of social evils, inequality and injustice. Not only the Prophet but four pious caliphs also ensured the security of minorities, their religions, life and properties.

The moral excellence and respect for human dignity which were taught by Islam are completely forgotten by the Muslims and as a result, according to the book, Muslims from Indonesia to Algeria are being ill-treated. However, the author is optimistic about the future of Muslims.

Dr Iqbal also discusses the Prophet’s address delivered at his last Hajj, and calls it the first declaration of human rights. He further added that at that time the inequalities, injustice and satanic forces were prevailing in Arabia. The Prophet of Islam said that man should have freedom of social and economic activities and every one should be equal before law. Thus, according to the author, it can be said that Muslims were the first proponents of human rights and promoters of the enlightenment, and the humanism now prevailing in the West is a result of a interaction between Muslims and Christians in Spain.

Discussing the role of the Qur’an and Science the author concludes that both of them are sources of enlightenment and guidance for the humanity. Religion gives idea about law and principles of nature, while Science works on these laws and provides new theories and ideas for progress and development. Both Science and Religion are oriented to explore the mysteries of the Universe and secrets of life.

Since 9/11, Muslims have been blamed for terrorizing of the World, Muslim countries were attacked on the basis of rumours. Muslims were accused of starting a clash of civilizations. Unfortunately West considered individual actions of some people as actions of whole Muslim World. In fact, Islam considers the murder of one human being, equivalent to the murder of the whole humanity. The author suggests than a clash of civilizations in fact is a clash of interests of growing powers to gain more and more economic benefits.

Islam is not a territorial religion and does not belong to a particular race or culture. It educes its own culture and core values from its divine belief which is opposite to the Western Culture. The rise of West and its culture is due to individualism, rationality and Capitalism. Amidst theological and cultural differences, the opposition to the Western civilization was most probably, a reaction to the colonization of Muslim countries.

There are several Qur’anic verses and Āḥādīth that are critical of some Christian and Jewish practices. However, according to majority of jurists, Muslims are not allowed to take up arms against non-Muslims on account of different beliefs. Muslims are allowed to use force only against those who wage a war against them.
The book is not written in an academic critical style. It does not provide research based argument and bibliography. The index is also not comprehensive. Moreover, there are many composing mistakes. The book contains several images and snaps without mentioning their sources. The book also carries reviews on some other books of the author without mentioning their sources.

Mujeeb Ahmad


Saudi Arabia is a unique state in many ways. It is a monarchy which claims itself to be “a monotheist state that upholds Sharia and Islamic values, in addition to being the protector of the most sacred Islamic shrines” surviving in a world dominated by alien concepts of democracy, secularism and human rights. “The regime, together with a mushrooming religious bureaucracy, created a world that insisted on complete submission to political authority while preaching total submission to God.”

Madawi Al-Rasheed, a Professor of Anthropology of Religion at King’s College, University of London, who specializes in Saudi history, society, politics and religion, has written this fascinating book as she realized that “despite being subject to authoritarian rule, Saudis today are engaged in a fierce debate about religion and politics.” According to her, “Saudi authoritarianism has led to consent and confrontation at the same time.” She has thus made a serious attempt to capture this ongoing debate, which she terms as ‘Wahhabi religio-political discourse.’

Capturing this debate was by no means an easy task, as Saudi Arabia is not an open society with a reasonable extent of freedom of expression. Dissenting views, both on religion and state management, and their relationship had been and are still a taboo, and are usually met with “blind and indiscriminate violence” by “a state that demands complete surrender to its will and by a minority that challenges this surrender.” The local media only gives the official version, and rarely acknowledges the differing views. The