There are two authorities on international relations that have the temerity and fortitude to see the inadequacies of Samuel Huntington's 'Clash Of Civilizations', a model developed more than a decade ago to explain world order.

Both Ms Ayann Hirsi Ali and Dr. Fouad Ajami are from The John's Hopkin's University. Both reside in Washington D.C., Ms. Ali is at the American Enterprise Institute, a think tank committed to free ideas and free markets. Both Ajami and Ali had the ear of Vice President Cheney along with Professor Emeritus Bernard Lewis of Princeton University immediately following September 11. Although Ajami was the first to tackle inconsistencies intrinsic to Samuel Huntington's thesis, it was Ali who firmly believed that Dr. Huntington's thesis was not sufficiently informed theoretically.

According to Dr. Ajami, neither Turkey, Malaysia nor Indonesia are susceptible to the wiles of Arabia. But it remained for Ms. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, in conjunction with Ajami to fortify the administrations political resolve to finger Iraq as the staging ground for an American incursion into Mesopotamia.
Ms. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, famous for her stint in Dutch Parliament and her role in Theo Van Gogh's movie 'Submission' sought political asylum in America due to overwhelming death threats.

Ali’s opinion, although not academic, is deeply formidable in tone and reach yet critical of Huntington understanding of Islamic civilization. What she reveals is exceedingly complex regarding militant Islam, its goals, reach and the promise that the west holds for quiet Muslims who dare not voice dissent.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali summarizes briefly the post-Cold war model that is Huntington's thesis: there are seven or eight historical civilizations of which the Western, the Muslim and the Confucian are the most predominant. "The balance of power among these civilizations, he argued, is shifting. The West is declining in relative power, Islam is exploding demographically, and Asian civilizations, especially China are ascendant."

According to Ali, Huntington's bold statement cannot stand the rigor of empirical criticism, for the nations that identify themselves as Islamic are predominantly poor with relative zero rates of economic growth; Sinic civilization remains poor along its interior. She points to the fact that China's embrace of Locke, Tocqueville and Madison after the exhaustion of Marxism has permitted the communist leaders in Beijing a deep reprieve. According to her, the west Huntington refers to is distinctly western Europe, where birth rates have plummeted and demography favors a militant rising Islam. The United States remains the single nation that is capable of projecting military, social and economic power. The rest are peripheral.

Huntington continues in writing that civilizational based order "is emerging in which nations that share cultural affinities will cooperate with one another and group themselves around a leading state of their civilization." This is clearly not happening as witnessed in the rise of China and the social impact of its ascendancy among Asian neighbors. Last month's Asian Conference had most of China's smaller regional neighbors asking the United States to defend them in relation to an ascendant Beijing.

Those familiar with Oriental history know that China has always been ruled by its northern Han to the detriment of its southern neighbors that work in the breadbasket that was always the 'Pearl River Delta'.
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Clauswitz vs Sun Tzu

Although Ajami was far more empirical in his acute criticism of Huntington, it remained for Ms Ali to breach the ideological ground that forms most of Huntington’s theme. She began referencing the 1989 idealist philosopher Francis Fukuyama and his “The End of History” Hegelian thesis, that with the end of Marxism, all that remained was Capitalism and our ‘unipolar’ world of unrivalled American hegemony. According to Ali, both men were unrealistic and pretentious in their understanding of international relations, for after the demise of an enforced Marxian grasp, how and whom would enforce the arrival of Capitalism abroad?

Both Huntington and Fukuyama as academics, fell for the trap of breeding their thoughts in isolation. Both had the key advantage of developing a model that describes the world as it should be, not as it is. For that, we

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witness the permanent failure that always accompanies rigid idealism.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali points to the failure of both moderate Muslims and the recent political behavior of Turkey as embodying the futility of the approach informing either Huntington or Fukuyama. "If Turkey can no longer be relied on to move towards the West, who in the Muslim world can be?"

A riveting question pointing to a very weak American President who has permitted Turkey's Recep Erdogan to sustain bilateral relations with Iran, permitted an identical pattern to emerge with Brazil regarding nuclear ambitions, not to mention the cynical 'aid flotilla' to Gaza.

Where is our best hope of checking militant Islam?

Both Ajami and Ayaan Ali reveal that Iraq, Jordan, Indonesia and Malaysia remain our very best hopes. For the Asian nations in the southern hemisphere along the equator are not susceptible to the centralized efforts of Arabia. Save possibly the Philippines; Indonesia and Malaysia still maintain capitalist cultural mores informed from British colonial era, this alone can supplant the militant drive that is intrinsic to political Islam.

Nevertheless, all of north and east Africa is demographically on the rise with fast track social and theological relations to the Arabian mainland. If there is one world order rising, it is not in the West, but with Islam, beginning along the long strip that is east Africa ending north in Egypt. Huntington's model of a 'Clash Of Civilizations' allows us several advantages, primarily in helping the West distinguish friends from enemies in non-aligned nations outside the framework that was Westphalia.

This Cold War template is outdated regarding the status of non-state actors whom are ideologically militant. Nevertheless, Huntington's failed model allows the leaders in the west to identify internal conflicts within Islamic civilizations, particularly the historical rivalries between Arabs, Turks and
Persians. Such theological and cultural division lends credence to an understanding that Islam is not monolithic.

Ms Ali is correct to admonish the United States that we simply cannot behave like the Colonial British who always followed the same foreign policy regardless of cultural terrain, namely divide and conquer. The forward moving 'freedom agenda' that comprised President Bush is far more favorable to American long-term interests. American leaders are going to have to shape and lead American domestic consensus for the 'long war'. For this job, Ajami and Ali believe that contemporary decentralized electronic media along with nativist American conservatism will prevail. Both Ajami and Ayaan Ali admonish Americans to rid ourselves of our 'One World' illusion that always finds a home in Jeffersonian idealism.

Instead she asks that we sharpen our realism to find both the ideological, moral and political propaganda that grounds contemporary Islam.