

# Islamic Revolution and the World System

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## Introduction

The victory of the Islamic Revolution and the collapse of the Soviet Union in the last two decades of the twentieth century, apart from effecting essential and fundamental internal change, brought significant and at times decisive transformations in the international community. In the intellectual and theoretical aspect of these transformations, one can call to mind the alteration and invalidation of some points of the theories and predictions put forth before such as the cancellation of taking the role of religion in the destiny and history of mankind on one hand, and the capability of universality of the Marxist-Leninist ideology, on the other hand. In stating the importance and value of this intellectual and theoretical transformation, it is enough to say that many of the international relations theorists were compelled to dissent from the idea and theory of their predecessors such as in the notion of the end of era of religion's capability in shaping the destiny and history of mankind.<sup>1</sup>

In this article, while taking a survey of the changes of the international system after the World War II up to the present and studying the presented views particularly on the future world system, I will embark on the discussion of impacts of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, particularly the thoughts of Imām Khomeinī, upon the trend of transformations of the aforesaid systems.

## Bipolar system

Subsequent to the victory of the Allied Forces in the World War II, a new system prevailed in the world, which was then unprecedented in the contemporary world. This system, which was known as bipolar system

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 32-34.

because of the existence and matchless domination of the two superpowers of the East and West and the Marxist and liberal ideologies, continued for almost forty years.

The dominance of the aforementioned bipolar system and its ever-increasing expansion and consolidation compelled most of the countries, small and vulnerable ones in particular, to ally with one of the two blocs. Gradually, this system was established on the basis of rule that in any of the national, regional or global changes and transformations not only that one of the two superpowers had an active presence and role behind them but that they would also seek and get help from one of the opposing poles. Although some ups and downs in the relations between the Western and Eastern superpowers took place throughout the dominance of the bipolar system, a particular feature known as the ‘Cold War’ dominated the series of relations between these two superpowers.

### **Unipolar system**

During the second half of the 1980s one of the two superpowers, i.e. the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, faced such a fundamental and extensive transformation and change, which not only put an end to its internal structure in an unimaginable manner but also—while ending the era of dominance of the bipolar system—made the international society face an extremely important and destiny-making question: What will be the type of the future international system and on the basis of which criteria and standards it will be established?

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union—which is the defeat of the Marxist-Leninist ideology after the declining in power of the seemingly undefeatable Soviet Union and its relinquishment of leadership of the Eastern Bloc—brought to existence a very conducive opportunity for the other superpower, by taking advantage of this opportunity, to extend and broaden its unmatched power over the entire world. It is to be noted that the aforesaid unmatched superpower saw the capitalist system anchored on liberalism and democracy of its own Western type that stood at the front of this system totally successful and victorious at the outcome of the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, that bespeaks of the inutility of the Marxist-Leninist ideology as well as the potency of the capitalist system to overcome the said ideology. Yet, a concern owing to the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Eastern Bloc, which could have rendered serious threat on setting aside the said superpower from the leadership of the Western world, compelled the statesmen and leaders of this country to eliminate the said serious threat by

formulating a new policy and a sort of intellectual alternative, and to extend and widen its dominance over the entire world while maintaining its leadership of the Western world.

Some of the American theoreticians considered the end of the Cold War as a very opportune time in introducing this idea in which the international peace and order requires the presence and establishment of a dominant power which, through reliance on its material interests and absolute power, is capable of ensuring and guaranteeing public security and welfare. Pursuant to this idea of the American theoreticians, the George Bush doctrine labeled as the 'New World Order' was brought to the fore. The said doctrine stood on the proposition that the United States of America, the only remaining superpower after the Cold War era, is in need of preserving a considerable degree of its military prowess to exert effective global influence. The said theory caught the attention of a number of scholars on international politics at the American universities and made them busy justifying and defending it. The most significant theory ever presented in this respect belongs to the structural realism of Kenneth Waltz.<sup>1</sup> The school based on this theory maintained that although the distribution of military capabilities at the end of the World War II warranted the Cold War competition between the two superpowers, at the time when in the mid-1980s the USSR lagged behind in preserving and perpetuating its military capability and necessarily withdrew from the scene of competition, America as the unrivaled power in the international system will remain as such.<sup>2</sup>

Ronald Reagan, by emphasizing this theory, which is the guaranteeing of peace through technological preeminence, was stating thus in his memoirs:

I know that he (Gorbachev) has strong motives in putting an end to the arms race. The Soviet economy is such a straw that a significant portion of which was used to be spent on armaments. He realized that exceedingly more than the Soviets we could be able to spend on arms as far as we like. The world is in the threshold of a new stage. We have the chance to make this world more secure and a better place for the present and the twenty-first century.<sup>3</sup>

The condition for continuation and consolidation of the new system can be said to be based on two fundamental principles. First, the American

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1979). [Trans.]

<sup>2</sup> Seymon Brown, "Explaining the Transformation of World Politics," *International Journal* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1991), pp. 207-219.

<sup>3</sup> Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), pp. 14-15.

administration should have such a capability and power to lead the world system—militarily, economically, politically, and socially. Second, the other members of the international community following such a system should be so subservient and obedient to the whims of America. In case of expression of defiance and insubordination, the defying and recalcitrant state should be punished and be taught a lesson as to how it should behave.<sup>1</sup>

The existence and implementation of the aforementioned dual conditions, which are the foundation of continuity of the new world order, seems to be impossible; for, economically, politically and socially the American society has no potentiality, necessary motive and sufficient conditions to assume the global leadership. Besides, the other countries do not have necessary preparedness to accept the American leadership and unconditionally follow that country. As a result, the latter part of the 1990s has witnessed a sort of the American endeavor to stabilize this system and the defiance of other countries based on rejection of this system, which finally led to the failure of America and that of the new unipolar system. It was in this context that the other states such as the People's Republic of China (PRC) propounded the idea of multipolar system, which has been objectionable for America and up to now, it has not acknowledged this reality.<sup>2</sup>

In the multipolar system, economic relations are a decisive factor in international relations and this factor replaces the military power. Under these conditions, the international system has no meaning without considering Asia particularly Japan as new poles of power. In the past, due to the decisive role of military power, the United States and Europe used to exert manipulative influence over Asia particularly Japan. Under the new conditions, however, Japan—having indescribable attention to the regions such as Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, which have experienced remarkable growth—has increased its economic power day by day and has

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<sup>1</sup> The scene of implementation and exhibition of the new unipolar system was provided for the American administration at the event of Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and by capitalizing on this aggression, America was able to pave the ground for the implementation of the new order under its leadership. Although the regime of Ṣaddām had announced its willingness to withdraw from Kuwait prior to the start of the Persian Gulf War, the American administration did not waste time and started the war through air and ground attacks while the other countries particularly the oil-rich countries of the Persian Gulf and some Western countries and Japan shouldered the expenditures of the war.

<sup>2</sup> For further information on various global systems, see Manūchehr Muḥammadī, “*Nāẓm-e Novīn-e Jahānī* [The New World Order],” Faculty of Law and Political Science Magazine, Tehran University, no. 28 (Āzar 1371 AHS).

also provided other alternative for these regions. This is while America and Europe has been drowning in the crisis of being lost.

The United States is facing a strong rival from the great economic potential and powerful strategic firmness of a united European community. As a result, it can neither gain global superiority for itself nor even preserve the status quo unless it could create a condition of destabilizing the two Asian and European powers.

Meanwhile, American theorists and statesmen were aiming to present new ideas that would embody the continuity of the American dominance and at the same time serve as guide for the American and Western statesmen. Along this line, the well-known American theoretician, Samuel Huntington, presented his controversial theory of 'the clash of civilizations'.

### **'Clash of civilizations' system**

Huntington, unlike other analysts who consider the end of the Cold War as the termination of the ideological conflicts, deems it the 'clash of civilizations' and on the basis of which interprets and analyzes most of the present world events and developments in such a way that he could strengthen the premises and assumptions of his theory.

He divides the living civilizations of the world into eight or nine great ones<sup>1</sup> and regards the lines of distinction between the said civilizations as the source of future conflicts and the replacement of the ancient unit of nation-state.

According to Huntington, the encounter of civilizations takes the form of the world dominant policy and the last stage of evolution of his time's conflicts. For, in his opinion:

- The conflict of civilizations is fundamental;
- Civilizational self-awareness is increasing;
- Religious revivalism as a means of filling the vacuum of identity is on the rise;
- The hypocritical behavior of the West has led to the civilizational self-awareness of others;
- Cultural peculiarities and differences are unalterable;
- Economic regionalism and the role of cultural commonalities are growing;

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<sup>1</sup> These civilizations are the Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic, Orthodox, Latin American, and at the margin, African civilizations.

- The existing faultlines between the civilizations of today have replaced the political and ideological borders of the Cold War era and these lines are sparks for the emergence of bloody crises; and
- The 14-hundred-year-old hostility between Islam and the West is mounting and the relations between the Islamic and Western civilizations will engender the emergence of bloody events.

As a result and on the basis of this idea of ‘clash of civilizations paradigm’, other global issues will be sidetracked and in the new era the line of recent views will take form around the axis of civilizations. Finally, the Islamic and Confucian civilizations together will also confront the Western civilization. In sum, the basic concentration of conflicts in the future will be between the West, on one hand, and the union of the East Asian Confucian societies and the Muslim world. In reality, conflicts of civilizations are the last stage of evolution of conflicts in the new world.<sup>1</sup>

Subsequent to the publication of Huntington’s article and the presentation of the controversial theory of the ‘clash of civilizations’, Western and Third World thinkers undertook numerous criticisms and meetings. These criticisms were mainly arguments, some of which emphasized on the theoretical and scientific weaknesses of the theory and considered it fundamentally feeble while others relied on the bases and testimonies presented by Huntington and argued that there exist many contradictions in this context. Some others totally rejected the theory of ‘clash of civilizations’ by presenting new issues.<sup>2</sup>

#### **‘Clash of civilizations’ theory as a cloak for the existing realities**

The thing given little attention by the critics of the ‘clash of civilizations’ theory is the fact that the motive, or let us say, the intention of Huntington in presenting this theory has not been designing a new ‘paradigm’. Rather, it was an alternative idea, or in other words, justification of the emergent contradictions after the collapse of the bipolar system—contradictions that emerged within the Western world and America, as well as the contradictions and disagreements between the Western world and other existing societies, and probably these contradictions will also be intensified in the future. Since this theory has caught much attention and that some realities of the future

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations,” *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993).

<sup>2</sup> For further information on this issue, see *Naẓariyyeh-ye Barkhord-e Tamaddunhā: Huntington va Muntaqidānesh [The Theory of ‘Clash of Civilizations’: Huntington and His Critics]*, trans. and ed. Mujtabā Amīrī (Tehran: Institute of Political and International Studies Publications, 1375 AHS).

world system are extant within it, while highlighting its fundamental points of weakness we will deal on the causes behind the emergence of this theory.

**Culture and civilization: Their relations with one another**

One of the weak points of the theory of clash of civilizations is that Huntington does not give a scientific and specific definition of ‘civilization’ and ‘culture’ and broadly interchanges one for the other. As a whole, Huntington imagines ‘civilization’ and ‘culture’ as two interrelated and understood in one another. He believes that civilization is the highest cultural category of people and the broadest cultural identity with which humankind can be categorized.<sup>1</sup>

Although presentation of a precise and comprehensive definition of ‘culture’ and ‘civilization’ is not an easy task just as connecting the two, considerable differences between the two can be observed to which Huntington has not paid attention. Among the various differences between civilization and culture, two main differences, Islāmī Nadūshan maintains, can be pointed out. First, civilization has more scientific and objective aspect while culture has more mental and spiritual dimension. Art, philosophy, wisdom, literature, and beliefs (religious and non-religious) are in the realms of culture while civilization is more concerned with the material needs of man in the society. Second, civilization has more social dimension while culture is more individual. Civilization ensures the progress of man in the social sphere. Culture can be said to be concerned with the individual evolution, aside from the above.<sup>2</sup>

Although these two terms have different meanings even in terms of etymology, in general they are used synonymously and interchangeably. ‘Civilization’ means ‘city-dwelling’ and even in Latin this terminology has the same conception while culture relates to the different modes of behavior of societies.

Civilization, which comes from the concept of ‘city dwelling’, means growth, progress, awareness, humankind’s utilization of the scientific and technological advancements, and creation of a more comfortable life for its societies. Throughout human history—although in every epoch and era some human societies have contributed in this growth and development—it has never confined to one particular society and all human societies have benefited from it. This is while culture has been an aggregate of literatures,

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>2</sup> Muḥammad Islāmī Nadūshan, *Farhang va Shebh-e Farhang [Culture and Quasi-culture]* (Tehran: Yazdān Publications, 1371 AHS).

customs, traditions, thoughts, beliefs, religions, and philosophies. In fact, it forms the identity of a community and society. Inevitably, it is also transmitted to other communities and societies. Likewise, culture is the distinguisher of different societies from one another. Civilization and culture are interrelated but they are not necessarily inseparable from one another.

It seems as though the West has exerted utmost endeavor in combining civilization and culture for its own utility and monopoly so that they (Westerners) could advance the proposition that civilization is their peculiar cultures, and other societies with cultures different from that of the West will be civilized only when they abandon their own culture. On the contrary, there are societies with rich culture but weak civilization and on the contrary, societies with high civilization but weak culture, or mixed culture such as in the case of migrant countries such as the United States of America.

Notwithstanding the vivid and essential difference between the two terms, ‘civilization’ and ‘culture’, Western scholars in general and others who follow them tried to use them synonymously and replace one with the other, and on this ground, Huntington makes no distinction between ‘civilization’ and ‘culture’.

### **Degeneration of the American society**

Huntington overlooks this crucial as well as destiny-making condition of the Western society, America in particular, just as by adopting the criteria and values which are wrong and incongruent with the natural disposition [*fiṭrah*] of human beings in implementing the materialist Marxist-Leninist ideology, the USSR finally collapsed from within after 70 years of existence and the invalidity of the said ideology was practically proved. For the same reasons, the United States of America and ultimately the Western world are also on the verge of collapse from within.

Brzezinski was among those who have paid attention to this crucial issue in his criticism of Huntington.<sup>1</sup> Initially, he has dealt with the dichotomized fabric of the Western culture at the intellectual level. He enumerates the irrecoverable weaknesses of this culture and finds fault with Huntington’s inattention to the internal contradiction of the Western culture. According to him, the discordant reigning secularism prevalent in the Western

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<sup>1</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Weak Ramparted (?) of the Permissive West,” *New Perspective Quarterly* 10, no. 3 (Summer 1993). Statistics substantiating this theory shows that from 1960, while the American population has 41 percent increase, the rate of violent crimes has 560 percent increase, single parenthood 419 percent, divorce 300 percent, and fatherless or motherless families 300 percent. This state of affairs suggests a serious social degeneration.

hemisphere nurtures within itself a fetus destroying the Western culture. In his view, that which will bring the American superpower to the brink of downfall is not the clash of civilizations. Rather, it is the internal corruption of the Western system and drifting away from spirituality, which will eradicate not only the American leadership but also ultimately the American culture as a role model and criterion for the others.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, everyday the United States has been more than ever diversified in terms of nationality and race. This affair, apart from being a symptom of social degeneration, will also lead to further discordance of culture of the country.<sup>2</sup> Yet, Huntington cannot totally distance himself from this issue as it would uncover the deadly trend, which has recently appeared in the West. This is but incapability to comprehend this matter, which might have possibly made the West experience structural weaknesses within its value systems and institutions. He justifies this trend—which even experienced a warm welcome due to the notion of the end of history and triumph of the Western norm based on Fukuyama's theory—with the notion that individual freedom and democracy will always ensure the leadership of the Western civilization.<sup>3</sup>

While the issue of decay of the Western liberalism in the absence of a cohesive ideological rival such as Marxism-Leninism is a serious matter, today's cultural fragmentation is in the process of destroying the aggregate of beliefs and intellectual philosophy, which underpins the American social fabric.

The political identity of the United States of America is embedded in the principles of the approved primary documents. If the de-Westernization of the United States is realized, it means de-Americanization and emptying this country of its present identity. If such would be the case and the Americans no longer believe in, and act according to, liberal-democracy and the political ideology of Europe, the United States will not remain the way we have

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<sup>1</sup> Kishore Mahbubani, "The Dangers of Decadence," *Foreign Affairs* (September-October 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Based on the estimates of the Statistics and Census Office, up to year 2050 the American population will embrace more than 33 percent Spanish-origin, 16 percent African-origin, and 10 percent Asian-origin. In a country that has successfully absorbed in the past millions of migrants from other countries, and because of the existence of wealth and better welfare facilities in this country, they adopted the European culture and American beliefs, it is so improbable that such a trend will continue in the future taking into account the fact that the demographic composition of this country will be 50 percent Hispanic and non-Whites.

<sup>3</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992).

understood it. Like other superpowers, which were defined merely on the basis of ideology, it will be effaced from the pages of history.

### **The conflict between the United States and Europe**

For the period of 40 years after the victory of the Allied Forces and because of the conflict between the West, i.e. between Western Europe and America, on one hand, and the East, i.e. the USSR and Eastern Europe, on the other, the internal conflict of the Western world was not only overshadowed, rather, owing to the post-war needs Western Europe accepted the leadership of the United States of America and coordinated its military, economic and social policies with that of America. Considering the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the communist system, and the absence of common enemy as well as the natural changes on the conditions of the European countries, there has been no more necessary motives for the preservation of the unity of the Western world, and the internal conflict within the Western society gradually surfaced.

Trying to create a unipolar world and persuade the Western European states to follow and accept its leadership, America witnessed the emergence of serious conflicts between Europe and America with the early failure of the unipolar system and the formation of the multipolar system. It should not be forgotten that the flame of the two world wars that took the lives of millions of people was initially kindled among the countries of the Western capitalist system.

In spite of the historical record of internal wars in Europe, Huntington claims that since both Germany and the United States of America belong to the Western family, serious conflicts between these two powers and other Western countries are already unimaginable! This is while the history of the past three centuries is replete with numerous wars within the Western family with Germany having an outstanding role.

There is no doubt that the British and French imperialism also convinced the Germans to pursue greater needs. Thus, Ernst Haas said in his book, "Like other great societies, the Germans see themselves rightful to attain necessarily their progress within Europe in case there is no chance of progress outside its borders."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Richard E. Rubenstein and Jarl Crocker, "Challenging Huntington," *Foreign Policy* 79, no. 265-6 (1994), pp. 113-128.

**Clash of civilizations or dialogue among civilizations?**

While Samuel Huntington speaks of the clash of civilizations, particularly between the Western civilization, on one hand, and the Islamic and Confucian civilizations, on the other hand, and predicts that the twenty-first century is the century of clash of civilizations, on the contrary, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran has put forth 'dialogue among civilizations'. At this juncture, this question will be posed: Is there really the clash of civilizations which, instead of preventing such a clash or minimizing the contradictions, the issue of dialogue among civilizations, or to be more precise, dialogue among cultures, be discussed?

That which separates the different societies, as what has been mentioned before, is not civilization but the culture of each of these societies. Amid the existing differences, cultures are also not necessarily in conflict or inimical to one another. Rather, it has been the governments as the representatives of the holders of power and force, which are at war with the other societies in order to expand their spheres of influence and power by exploiting these differences along the way of attaining their hegemonic aims. They subjected the societies to soil and blood, and sought the compliance of their nations by force or propaganda. In other words, it was these cultures as a tool that were at the service of governments, and not that the governments are at the service of cultures and civilizations. Without paying attention to the serious cultural differences between the Islamic and Confucian cultures, Huntington talks about the unity between the two against the Western civilization and does not mention about the existing commonalities between the two.

It seems as though that which makes the two societies close to each other vis-à-vis the West is that during the last centuries both of them have been subjected to Western colonialism, exploitation and even humiliation. They have so much bitter memories and accounts of oppression and the like that the West have committed against their societies. Nowadays, as the nations of these societies were awakened, they are resisting the dominations of the West, foremost of which is that of America. Huntington expresses concern about the common conflict of these civilizations with the West. Huntington does not want to acknowledge the undeniable fact that the Asian and African societies have not forgotten the bitter periods of oppressive exploitation of the West such as the Opium War in China, Slave Trade in Africa, and the plundering of the enormous God-given resources of the Muslim world within the context of colonialism and neocolonialism. Worrying about the emergence of a new conflict among the Western states particularly between America and Europe on the division of economic resources of the world,

Huntington is on the threshold of creating a new enemy. He is impliedly justifying the statement of Hobbes as he says, “If the barbarians have no foreign existence, then we ought to create them.”<sup>1</sup>

### **The awakening and awareness of the nations**

The other reason behind the coinage of the ‘clash of civilizations’ thesis not only arises from the record of colonization and exploitation committed by the West to the Third World countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The nations of these societies not only do not forget the oppression done to them but also gradually claim for their rights and this affair has provided the opportunities for the awakening of the nations and uprising against the Western colonialists. In the opinion of Huntington, the existence of this contradiction, which is actually between the world of oppressors and the world of the exploited, is inevitable. Instead of acknowledging the reason behind this reality, he tries to present this ever-increasing contradiction as the clash of civilizations.

Huntington forgets that one year prior to his presentation of the clash of civilizations theory, he had conveyed his intention and concern over the developments to happen after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In an article entitled, “American Changing Strategic Interests,”<sup>2</sup> he had studied and analyzed the world situation particularly the status of America. He puts forth the following suggestions to preserve the status quo as well as the American interests:

1. In order to maintain the American status as the superpower of the world, the phenomenal economic competitiveness of Japan must be confronted;
2. The emergence of a dominant military-political power in the Eurasian region (such as Germany and China) must be prevented;
3. The fundamental interests of America in the Third World, which are mainly latent in the Persian Gulf and Central America, must be protected.

The gist of Huntington’s arguments includes: The United States of America will face new problems, oppositions and resistances in the world. In order to deal with and confront these new challenges, it should not think for solutions as it can neither preserve the necessary superiority for itself nor

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Theodore A. Columbus and Thanaos Veremis, “In Search of New Barbarians,” *Mediterranean Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (Winter 1994), pp. 36-44.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, “American Changing Strategic Interests,” *Survival* 33 (January-February 1991), pp. 12-13.

even maintain the status quo unless it provides the ground for the continuity of this superiority through sketching and designing a strategy and new order for the twenty-first century world. It is owing to these problems that Huntington presents the clash of civilizations theory and through which he overlooks the existing realities in the world. At any rate, he dexterously assumes the irreconcilability of the Islamic and Western world as a definite and vivid principle. He endeavors to explain the domination-seeking and expansionist policies of the Western states and the opposition of the Muslim world against these policies within the framework of clash of two civilizations.

As such, I am of the opinion that the invitation of Huntington to the universal defense of the interests of the West against the rival civilizations is the worst form of self-fulfilling prediction. Anyhow, his emphatic question based on this: "If not civilization, then what?" seeks for an answer, which is as follows: In a bid to eliminate the problems and meet the necessities of human beings, the world is in need of forming a strong movement to generate social transformation—a movement that is yet to appear. Yet, its indications and signs have already manifested with the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

### **Islamic Revolution and the future world system**

In the latter part of the nineteenth century especially after the successive defeats in the war against the Tsarist Russia, Iran had weakened and no courage to resist against the military, political and cultural aggressions of the dominant powers of the time. Due to the strategic location of this country, it had become the scene of rivalry among the alien powers. Up to the time prior to the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Iran had been the arena of influence and rivalry of the great powers of the world, which had been the principal actors of the formed systems of the world.

Before the World War I, Iran was the scene of influence and rivalry between Britain and Tsarist Russia. It had acknowledged the matchless dominance of Britain between the two wars. After the World War II, America as the new superpower was able to play a key and fundamental role in the political and social developments in Iran. It is interesting to note that during these periods the anti-despotism and anti-colonialism movements in Iran such as the Constitutional Movement<sup>1</sup> and the oil industry

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<sup>1</sup> What has become known as the Constitutionalism or Constitutional Movement took place due to the chaotic situation in Iran at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the popular protest over the tyranny of the governors and agents of the

nationalization also took shape and succeeded through the people's solidarity but not free from the interference and support of some alien powers. During the Constitutional Movement, the imperialist British government used to support the Constitutionals and in the nationalization of the oil industry, the Americans were backing up the Nationalist Front.

The first instance of an independent movement free from the influence of the foreigners was the Islamic movement under the leadership of Imām Khomeinī (*r*), which took shape in 1962-63 at the peak of the Cold War and the unchallengeable dominance of the bipolar system. By releasing this famous statement, "America is worse than Britain; Britain is worse than America; and the Soviet Union is worse than the two; each is filthier than the rest, but today we are dealing with these wicked ones, with America,"<sup>1</sup> or this utterance, "We are at war with international communism just as we are with the world-devouring West under the stewardship of America,"<sup>2</sup>

Imām Khomeinī raised for the first time his laud voice against the world oppressive system. Indeed, the Islamic movement is the first popular movement to take shape with the support of all the world's oppressed. By not considering the existing conflicts and rivalry among the great powers of the world, it treated them (the great powers) as only after of dividing spoils, and took none of them as in favor of the nations. The more interesting point is that both the two great powers of the world—amid the severe rivalry and hostility they explicitly manifested in the international scene—saw the Islamic movement as a reactionary movement and condemned it especially after the Khordād 15 uprising.<sup>3</sup>

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dictatorial regime and the unruly officials of the government, the weakness and ineptitude of the then king Muzaffaruddīn Shāh, and finally the rising awareness among the people and revolt of the clerics and '*ulamā*'. Years of struggle by the people culminated in the victory of the Constitutional Revolution in 1906. Although the Constitutional Movement was derailed from its proper path, it was able to transform the social organization in Iran, to destroy class privileges, to obliterate the power of the courtiers, and great landowners, and to establish justice and the rule of law. However, with the influence of the Westernized elements, and eliminating the clergies from the political scene and governance, the Constitutional Movement did not achieve its desired objectives and finally with the coup staged by Riḍā Khān, the father of Iran's ex-Shāh, a monarchical rule once again emerged in Iran. [Trans.]

<sup>1</sup> *Ṣahīfeh-ye Nūr*, vol. 1, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> *Ṣahīfeh-ye Nūr*, vol. 12, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> On June 3, 1963, Imām Khomeinī delivered a historic speech in Qum, repeating former denunciations of the Shāh's regime and warning the Shāh not to behave in such a way that the people would rejoice when he should ultimately be forced to leave the country. Two days later, he was arrested at his residence and taken to confinement in Tehran. His arrest prompted a major uprising in many Iranian cities, which resulted in the deaths of not less than 15,000 people in the span of a few days when the Shāh's troops opened fire on unarmed

With the culmination of the Islamic Revolution in 1978-79 and presentation of the slogan, “Neither East nor West, but Islamic Republic,” this movement continued its independent conduct and strategy at the height of resistance to the world repressive system. It attained victory while not only a single state from among the constellation of states in the world, particularly the principal players in the bipolar system, did not support the Revolution but also, the Shāh’s despotic regime was backed up by the great powers of the East and West such as the Soviet Union, People’s Republic of China, the United States of America, and Britain.

This Islamic Revolution is not a common revolution and not relying on any of the two poles of the East and West. As such, it had and has its own peculiarities. By treading the straight path of “neither East nor West,” it is standing vis-à-vis the two poles. It is not afraid of any of the fictitious powers, which exactly led to its miraculous victories.<sup>1</sup>

This confrontation and clash between the Islamic Revolution, on one hand, and the bipolar system prevalent in the world, on the other hand, continued up to the collapse of the USSR or the end of the Cold War and the bipolar system. Especially during the period of the imposed war and Iraqi aggression to Iran, the principal actors of the system were also compelled to continue confronting the dynamic Islamic Revolution and they used to support the Iraqi regime with all political, military and economic facilities.

After the collapse of the bipolar system and the proposal of the hierarchical system, in other words, the unipolar system, the Islamic Revolution maintained its uncompromising stance with the oppressive systems, which were products of the great powers. It became known as the first ‘defiant’ and ‘rebellious’ in the unipolar system. The American government made an untiring effort to punish this ‘defiant’ of the unipolar system so as to be able, through strengthening and stabilizing law-abidance, to give identity to this new system with its unmatched domination of the world society. Proposals such as the ‘dual containment policy’ of Gingrich<sup>2</sup> and D’Amato are deemed part of the American effort along this line.

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demonstrators. The date on which this uprising began was 5th June or 15th Khordād according to the solar calendar used in Iran and became known as the uprising or movement of 15th Khordād. [Trans.]

<sup>1</sup> *Ṣahīfeh-ye Nūr*, vol. 19, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Newt Gingrich: a former US Republican House of Representatives speaker who, in October 1995, had pushed for a \$20 million fund for a covert action plan to overthrow the Islamic government of Iran. This plan is likewise known as the Gingrich Plan. [Trans.]

It seems that the clash of civilizations theory presented in the past few years is not only an announcement of the early defeat of the unipolar system but also a conflict—through distortion of the world public opinion and concealment of the reality—which Imām Khomeinī and the Islamic Revolution have exposed. It is the conflict between the ruling domineers, world-devourers, exploiters, and colonialists, on one hand, and the oppressed, deprived, exploited, and subjugated nations and communities, on the other hand. In short, it is generally the conflict between the oppressors and downtrodden in the entire world. The Islamic Revolution and Imām Khomeinī as the designers of this theory, and patrons and champions of the downtrodden, have hoisted the banner of resistance and rose up against all the tyrants of the world.

“Through the political agents they have placed in power over the people, the imperialists have imposed on us an unjust economic order, and thereby divided our people into two groups: oppressors and oppressed.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, the Islamic Revolution not only led to the victory of the Iranian nation over the tyrant monarchial regime but it is also the beginning of a global movement for eradicating oppressive systems of the world based on the awakening and uprising of the deprived and oppressed nations. Below we will deal on the sketched explanation of the described system by Imām Khomeinī and the Islamic Revolution.

As an ideological revolution and its particular worldview springing from the Islamic school of thought, the Islamic Revolution is not only the reviver in the national dimension of its own particular plans, programs and views for governance and statesmanship, rather, keeping in view the universality of Islam, in the global dimension it has also its own particular thoughts and ideas, and is the presenter of its own particular global system.

As in every revolution and based on the nature of the program and goals of the concepts, the Islamic Revolution has offered peculiar terms and expressions some of which embraces a particular world itself of pure thoughts. Among these terms and expressions, *mustaḍ‘afīn* [downtrodden], *mustakbirīn* [oppressors], *jahān-e istikbārī* [World Arrogance], and *ḥākimiyyat-e mustaḍ‘afīn* [rule of the downtrodden] can be mentioned.

The Islamic Revolution and its leadership have not only repudiated the views dominant in the international relations and the existing world system, which are adopted from the views of Machiavelli, Hobbes and Hans

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<sup>1</sup> Imām Khomeinī, *Islamic Government: Governance of the Jurist*, trans. Ḥamīd Algar (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeinī’s Works, 2002), p. 30.

Morgenthau, upholding might as right, rather, on the basis of the following belief and view that they act and move:

“World peace and prosperity depends on the annihilation of the arrogant and oppressors [*mustakbirīn*]. So long as these uncultured power-seekers exist on the surface of the earth, the disinherited and deprived [*mastad‘afīn*] cannot obtain the inheritance (of power and authority in the world),<sup>1</sup> which has been promised to them by God, the Exalted;”<sup>2</sup> and “Government of the barefooted is rightful and just.”<sup>3</sup>

From the viewpoint of Islam and the Qur’an, the term *mustad‘af* [disinherited, deprived or downtrodden] means ‘one who is kept weak’ and ‘one who is considered weak’ and it can be divided into two categories: (1) impotent and unwary downtrodden and (2) wary downtrodden. According to the Qur’an, *istid‘āf* [the state of being downtrodden] has a broader meaning than ‘exploitation’ and this concept cannot be limited. Any state of being a victim of tyranny and oppression in any form and exploitation of the ideas and accomplishments of others is a form of *istid‘āf*. In other words, apart from being victim of economic exploitation, any sort of being subject to unjust and iniquitous mental exploitation and any kind of inequity to personality, and spiritual and cultural growth is deemed a kind of *istid‘āf*.

In the same manner, the term *istikbār* [arrogance and oppression] being the opposite of *istid‘āf*, is not specifically economic domineering; rather, any type of domineering is included and whose pillar and foundation is rebellion against, and disobedience to, God, which can be manifested in the political, economic and cultural dimensions or their aggregate in the society.

From the beginning of the Islamic movement and especially after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Imām Khomeinī used to point out in his statements and writings the ideal global system according to Islam and the Islamic Revolution. By referring to his discourses and writings, we will embark on the sketched description of this system:

1. Contrary to Marxists who believe in historical materialism and who considered the rule of the working class as inevitable, Imām Khomeinī believed that only through the downtrodden nations’ awakening and awareness of their inalienable rights and uprising against the arrogant and oppressors that they will become victorious.

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<sup>1</sup> It refers to *Sūrah an-Nūr* 24:55 wherein God has promised to those who believe and do righteous deeds that the earth would be their inheritance. [Trans.]

<sup>2</sup> *Ṣahīfeh-ye Imām*, volume 12, p. 144.

<sup>3</sup> *Ṣahīfeh-ye Nūr*, vol. 11, p. 262.

“The downtrodden must rise up. The downtrodden of all countries, of all states must get their rights with a clenched fist. They should not wait for them (the arrogant and oppressors) to give them their rights. The arrogant and oppressors will give nobody’s right.”<sup>1</sup>

2. Just as he considered necessary and inevitable the creation of awareness and practical uprising of the downtrodden for the realization of their sovereignty in the world, by relying on a noble verse of the Qur’an he reckoned it definite and certain. “Behold nations of the world who are all deprived and disinherited! Move from where you are (i.e., you act), get your right and do not be afraid of the hullabalos of the powerful ones for God is with you and the earth is your inheritance.”<sup>2</sup>
3. The maintenance of peace and prosperity is not dependent upon the establishment of the balance of power and the other already presented and experienced systems of the Western scholars and statesmen. Rather, it is only possible through the annihilation and defeat of the arrogant powers.

This movement, the movement of the downtrodden against the arrogant must be spread in the entire world. Iran is the beginning, first point and model for all the downtrodden nations. In all strata of the world the Muslims must stand up, nay the downtrodden must stand up. God’s promise encompasses the downtrodden, saying that He has promised to the downtrodden that they be leaders and inheritors of the world. Leadership is the right of the downtrodden. Inheritance is for the downtrodden. The arrogant and oppressors are usurpers. The arrogant and oppressors must be effaced from the scene.<sup>3</sup>

4. The downtrodden are not only confined to the Muslims and the Third World nations. Rather, they embrace all the masses under tyranny and oppression in the different parts of the world even those who are under the rule of the arrogant states of the East and West. Therefore, none of the geographical-cultural elements and nation-state divisions is an indication of the partition between the downtrodden and the arrogant. In the same manner, the clash of civilizations or cultures theory or the polarization of the world is nothing but for the perpetuation of the arrogant and oppressors’ dominance or the

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<sup>1</sup> *Ṣahīfeh-ye Nūr*, vol. 11, p. 259.

<sup>2</sup> *Ṣahīfeh-ye Nūr*, vol. 15, p. 212; *Ṣahīfeh-ye Imām*, vol. 12, p. 138.

<sup>3</sup> *Ṣahīfeh-ye Nūr*, vol. 6, p. 168; *Ṣahīfeh-ye Imām*, vol. 7, p. 292.

conflict among them in dividing the spoils as well as in exploiting and repressing the different societies and nations.

You should know that the nations (of the world), even the non-monotheist ones, are all part of the downtrodden of the world and they have been always under the dominance of the arrogant and oppressors.<sup>1</sup> Both superpowers are bent on annihilating the downtrodden nations. We must support the downtrodden of the world. Islam does not differentiate between Muslim and non-Muslim countries and it supports all the downtrodden of the world.<sup>2</sup>

5. Contrary to the previous systems which have taken form on the basis of the secularist and humanist thoughts, and promoted hedonism, leisure and consumerism as a pleasant way of living, this system is anchored on the return to religion and the sovereignty of God. It finds prosperous life in attachment as much as possible to piety, ethical order and divine spiritual beliefs. It sternly condemns and rejects the culture of capriciousness and wealth-centeredness, which is the conduct of the arrogant and oppressors.
6. The Muslims in general, and in particular, the Muslim nation of Iran—which for the first time emerged triumphant against *istikbār* [arrogance and oppression] through the grace of benefiting from the vitalizing and human-building school of Islam—assume the role of guidance and leadership of this great global uprising. In other words, it is the spread and exportation of the revolution in the sense of endeavor in the resistance to *istikbār* and in the defense of the downtrodden. “God willing, with the spread of the Islamic Revolution the satanic powers will be isolated and the government of the downtrodden will pave the ground for the global government of the Mahdī (*‘a*) at the end of time.<sup>3</sup>

What we can understand from the writings and views of Huntington, Brzezinski and others is this: First, theorization and planning of the arrogant and oppressive powers for the perpetuity of their dominance over the world continue. Meanwhile, from their views can be noticed an atmosphere of concern about the increasing awakening of the downtrodden nations of the world, their unity and solidarity in whatever extent regardless of the cultural,

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<sup>1</sup> *Ṣahīfeh-ye Nūr*, vol. 15, p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> *Ṣahīfeh-ye Nūr*, vol. 12, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in *Dar Justijū-ye Rāh az Kalām-e Imām* [In Search of the Way from the Words of Imām Khomeinī], p. 15.

racial and religious distinctions, and the opposition against the domineering and oppressive states. In spite of the fact that Latin America is part of the Western culture, because of its antagonism and disagreement with domineering and domination, Huntington does not put these two societies in one group and front. Meanwhile, he sees the Islamic and Confucian civilizations, which have extremely little cultural commonalities, in one front and party! This is while the only point of commonality between these two different cultural societies is their bitter memories of the periods of Western domination whose effects are still conspicuous. It seems that in the twenty-first century, after experiencing a multipolar system, the world community will enter a new bipolar system in which one pole are the arrogant and oppressive powers with all their military economic facilities, and in the other pole are the downtrodden nations of the world particularly the downtrodden nations of the Third World. Under the leadership of the awakened and vigilant Muslims, they have risen up and the arrogant and oppressors will kneel down.

Although the arrogant and oppressive states have and will have considerable armed, military and economic facilities and equipments, they have no alternative but to engage in a precarious war in both the internal and external fronts with the awakened and vigilant masses. Under this condition, those facilities will not be capable of saving the tyrants and definitely, as what has been promised by God, the final victory of the downtrodden, who will be the inheritors and vicegerents of God on earth, will be realized.

*“And We desired to show favor unto those who were oppressed in the earth, and to make them examples and to make them the inheritors.”<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> *Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ* 28:5. [Trans.]