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**A Critical Analysis of
“THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS?”
Samuel P. Huntington**

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Introduction

- Huntington was a Harvard professor in the Department of Government.
- Article published in 1993.
- Conflict will be defined by culture and identity.
- His theories influenced policymakers.

Historical Context

1988 Iran v Iraq War ended.

1989 Fall of the Berlin Wall (Cold War).

1989 Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan (mujahideen, Taliban).

1989 Tiananmen Square (China).

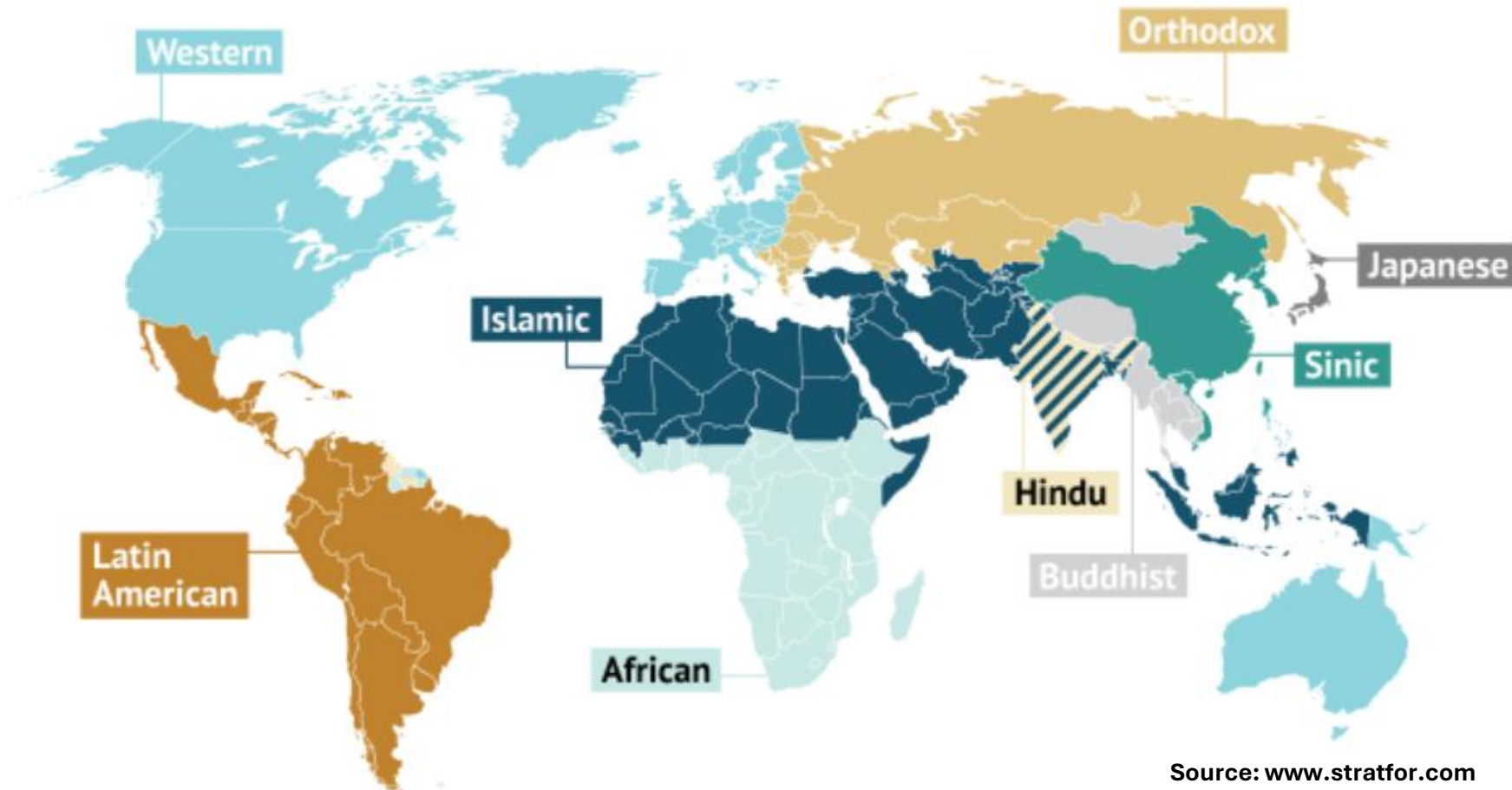
1990/91 First Gulf War (Saddam Hussein).

1992 Start of the Bosnian War (ethnic cleansing/genocide).

Key Points

- Future conflicts will be “cultural” and not ideological/economic.
- Defines “cultural” to mean ethnic groups, nationalities and religious groups.
- Roughly 7 civilizations (Africa as a possible 8th).
- *“fault lines of civilization will be the battle lines of the future”*
- Cautions about Islam and China.

Huntington's “Civilizations”



Strengths in his Arguments

- He anticipated the post–Cold War tensions between the US & China.
- Tensions between the West and Islam.
- National and religious identities would remain powerful drivers.
- The rise of China to rival the US economically and militarily.

Weaknesses in his Arguments

- His arguments lacked empirical evidence.
- He used theoretical and predictive assumptions.
- Islamophobe and Orientalist thinking.
- Western civilization (Us) v non-Western civilization (Them).

Challenging Huntington's Assumptions

- Bounded social groups = Us v Them (Ferguson, 2008).
- Theoretically and empirically suspect (Denemark, Hoffman and Yonten, 2023).
- Differences in identity are not a cause of conflict (Sharma, 2016).
- Religion is often politicised, not inherently violent (Khan, 2016).

Challenging Huntington's Assumptions

- Modernisation changes cultures (Seif-Amirhosseini, 2013).
- "the environment" will be the national security issue of the twenty-first century (Kaplan, 2013).
- “cultural violence” could be applied (Galtung, 1990).

Summary of Gaps in His Thinking

- Few non-Western perspectives.
- Lack of empirical research.
- More analysis of additional factors which influence conflict (environment, poverty, inequality).
- Internal conflicts.
- East v West thinking.
- Culture change.

Conclusion

- Theory is too simplistic.
- More empirical analysis required.
- Religion is not the only dominant factor.
- Environment, inequality, poverty were overlooked.
- Cultures are constantly changing.
- Conflict within civilizations.

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