In his famous and much debated 1993 essay “The Clash of Civilizations” (and subsequent book with the same title), the noted political scientist Samuel Huntington argued that “conflicts between groups in different civilizations will be more frequent, more sustained and more violent than conflicts between groups in the same civilization.” Globalization and modernization, he argued, were heightening interaction among different cultures, promoting fundamentalism, prompting a backlash against Western influence, and increasing inter-civilizational hostility. As evidence of these trends, Huntington pointed to conflicts between Pakistan and India, Arabs and Israelis, Iraq and the United States, and among Eastern Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats, and Muslims in the former Yugoslavia. Fouad Ajami strongly disagrees, arguing that Huntington misinterpreted these cases, exaggerated the extent of fundamentalism, and seriously overestimated the impact of culture on international politics.
Discussion Questions

1) What are the trends in the spread of Islamic and Hindu fundamentalism according to Ajami? Is the situation a simple or complex one?

2) What accounts for the variations in the appeal of fundamentalism worldwide?

3) How does Ajami interpret the Yugoslav Civil War and the 1991 Persian Gulf War differently from Huntington? Whose view do you find more persuasive?

4) Have events since Ajami and Huntington wrote their articles seemed to bear out one author or the other?

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