

## VI. Translation and Activism

A good example of a particularly pernicious conceptual narrative that has exercised considerable influence beyond its immediate disciplinary boundaries is Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996). A political scientist at Harvard University, Huntington classifies world civilizations into distinct groups, namely Western, Eastern Orthodox, Latin American, Islamic, Japanese, Chinese, Hindu, and African civilizations, each with "inherent" cultural characteristics (mostly conflicting with "good" American values); and he predicted that culture would replace ideology as the principal cause of conflict in the twenty-first century. In a more recent book, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (2004), Huntington looks at North American society through the same neoconservative cultural prism and elaborates a narrative of an internal clash of civilizations, arguing that the new war is between the country's white majority and its growing Hispanic population. In an earlier article on the same theme published in the influential journal *Foreign Affairs* in 1993, Huntington explicitly argued that "in this emerging era of cultural conflict the United States must forge alliances with similar cultures and spread its values wherever possible. With alien civilizations the West must be accommodating if possible, but confrontational if necessary". Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* has been a major reference point for

George W. Bush's U.S. administration, and the narratives it has spawned have been directly linked to the official public narratives related to the events of 11 September 2001, and the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq. Every discipline, including translation studies, elaborates and thrives on its own set of conceptual narratives; and Huntington's narrative stands as an example of the role narrative plays in such contexts.

Clearly, narratives do not travel across linguistic and cultural boundaries and do not develop into global meta narratives without the direct involvement of translators and interpreters. What is significant at present is that growing numbers of professional and non-professional translators and interpreters are actively setting out to elaborate alternative narratives that can challenge the oppressive public and meta narratives of our time.

Extracted from: Mona Baker, *Translation and Activism: Emerging Pattern of Narrative Community*

**Reading Guidelines:**

The language of media and political events taking place in the reader's time is very motivating and can help a lot in bettering the language skills of the student.

**Q.I** Give the exact meaning of the following words first in English and second in Arabic: pernicious, considerable, inherent, predicted. Ideology, prism, forge, alien, spawned, thrives on, meta narrative, alternative.

**Q.II** Derive as many words as you can from the following words: example, narrative, distinct, theme, replace, arguing, discipline, global, elaborate, oppressive.

**Q.III** Give the opposites of the words below and use them in good English sentences of your own: immediate, principal, internal, majority, influential, similar, possible, major, directly, public, growing.

**Q.IV** Answer the following questions briefly:

1. Who is Samuel Huntington? What did he do?
2. What did he predict?
3. How does Huntington view the North American society?
4. What else does he argue in the journal of Foreign Affairs?
5. What stand does he take on alien civilizations?
6. Where does the danger of Huntington's views lie?
7. Do translators and interpreters have a role in spreading narratives? How?
8. Are there other alternatives to Huntington's clash of civilizations?

Q.V Read one or two good articles on the clash of civilizations in Arabic and translate the first part of this topic.

Research Activity:

What is the narrative approach to translation?  
What are the other types of narratives? What is the role that should be played by "good" translators and interpreters?

**Quote of the Day:**

**The original is unfaithful to the translation.**

Jorge Luis Borges