

ONE YEAR AFTER SEPTEMBER 11: A CLASH OF CIVILISATIONS OR THE POLITICS OF HEGEMONY?

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The military operation in Afghanistan, the escalation of violence in Palestine, and the threat of war over Iraq, coupled with the incessant rhetoric about Islamic terrorists, in the wake of September 11, have created the erroneous impression that a clash between Islam and the West is imminent. A closer look at these conflicts and the post September 11 scenario will reveal that what is emerging is not a clash of civilisations but a hegemonic pattern of power determined by the Washington elite. It is an hegemony, which has evoked resentment from a significant segment of humankind including the people of Europe. Driven by narrow economic interests and myopic strategic considerations, the hegemony seeks to perpetuate its dominance aided primarily by media propaganda and military muscle. A small group within the Muslim community has chosen to respond to Washington's hegemony via violence and terror. However, for the vast majority of Muslims and others hegemonic control can only be checked through an international system where there is some balance of power and through a global ethic that restrains social greed and political lust. It will not be easy creating such a system or implementing such an ethic. But without equitable distribution of wealth, power and knowledge on a global scale, undergirded by a universal value system that emphasises justice, equality and compassion, it may not be possible to ensure the survival of the human race!