

The logo features a blue geometric shape resembling a stylized network or a map of the Bay of Bengal region, composed of interconnected nodes and lines.

# Bay of Bengal Conversation 2023

## *Rising Tides*

### After Show Conversation: “**Culture Wars Beyond Borders**”

#### Speakers:

**Ali Riaz**, Distinguished Professor, Illinois State University, USA

**C. Christine Fair**, Professor, Security Studies, Georgetown University, USA

**Gregory Simons**, Associate Professor, Department of Communication Science, Turiba University, Sweden

**Irfan Yar**, Founder & Managing Director, Afghanistan Security Institute, Canada (Moderator)

**Irfan Yar**, “Welcome to this opening session which is on- “Culture Wars Beyond the Borders”. And for this session I’m joined by very esteem scholars. I have next to me Professor of security studies Christine Fair from Georgetown University, I have Ali Riaz a distinguished Professor from Illinois State University USA and then we have Gregory Simons, associate Professor, department of Communication Science Turiba University and myself Irfan Yar, the founder and managing director of Afghanistan security institute and I also work as a full-time with the World Food Program. I welcome you all to this session. Can we have a big round of applause just to encourage our speakers, thank you very much. I’m sure you might have heard all about culture war, we talk about conventional war, cyber warfare but more or less most of us may know what is a cultural war. In from my very shallow understanding a culture war commonly refer to topics on which there is general disagreement- it can be social values social belief system, which can include attitudes toward religion, abortion for example, homosexuality, multiculturalism, feminism popular culture and even what has been taught in the school. So everything more or less can be you know put into this debate. I will just come straight to the panelist because they are the expert on this topic and then they will provide more information on this topic. So I’m starting with Professor Simon- could you please tell us and our audience here what exactly is culture war? And why this is important to discuss here? Thank you.”

**Gregory Simons**, “So I mean that was a good overview to tease out some different talking point points. So I mean if we're looking at culture war it's touching upon culture itself which is something very specific. It's something very emotional and it's something which is contested. So if we look at these things culture and identity that these are coming together sometimes harmoniously other times not. I mean if you look at the belief system there are three broad levels of belief. The least held ones which chop and change opinions. And then we can move up to attitudes which are a bit

more solidified and the most solid part of a person are values. And so we're looking at the values and maybe sometimes attitudes come into it more rather than the other ones and so this is looking at culture. I mean and of course when one defines themselves in a certain way this is not only about group cohesion but it's also signaling to outside groups what you stand for, who you are these kinds of things. So it's for internal cohesion but for projecting externally what you represent who you are. And this can get problematic when you're getting different cultures although sometimes it's not always straightforward either it depends on the level I would say the things that sort of determine whether something comes to where whether you can have harmony or conflict. I mean it depends on this ideological component but also this more pragmatic component as a counterweight. So for example I was organizing a conference on the image of Islam in Russia and had a diverse group of people around. Which included liberals they included Muslims they included hardcore Orthodox believers. And one soon saw that this idea of culture is not so straightforward one would assume that one would have a greater affinity with fellow countrymen or these other things. But what I found was that the more liberally minded it didn't matter which country they came from had a natural draw to each other. And those believers it didn't matter if the Orthodox or Muslims had that affinity to each other. And so this idea of culture is not always to be assumed or presumed. But it is important to understand this identity and as and this projection how if we look at how this operates when this you one can also have multiple identities. Like for example I'm from New Zealand, I live in Sweden and more specifically I was from a New Zealand farm and I'm in a Swedish University town, so one can say there's a little bit of culture how do you call it clash of civilizations I think was the term for this. Although theoretically at the bigger level both liberal democracies but you have these differences. And I mean we can look at what is happening which is tearing things apart at the moment especially in this western civilization if we

want to call it that between the culturally and social conservative versus the culturally and socially leftist progressive different terms for it but one can see that there is quite a bit of bitterness in this and this is the contestation where it's a zero sum game. One side's not prepared to give ground to the other so I would say that it's not going very good places but what one can also see the problems with this culture war. Because if we're looking at strictly this idea of this other conflict at the moment the global North versus the global South one can see the different nuances in here. Because if we look at what is happening even in the EU for example the European Union you have a divide between old so-called EU member states and new EU member states. And this is a great deal of this is owing to culture. I mean the one thing they all agree on are the geopolitical angles but when it comes to culture this is where you have the differences. Because if we look at this elite of the leading European Union countries these are falling into this more liberal category this global liberalism or however you wish to define that particular group. And that of course is causing problems with those from Eastern European countries who are socially and culturally more conservative we are religion traditional families at these different points are still very sacred cards which are not to be sacrificed. And if we look at it this is probably going to be one of the things which is going to cause much more problems in the future. And we can see a number of these things boiling up now because we have those so-called problem countries as far as the European Union is concerned Poland Hungary and well we can add Slovakia soon enough Romania. But the I mean you've got this issue here so this is at the one level the supra level and I mean this cultural war I mean war I mean as a contestation and this does not necessarily mean something which is how do you call it kinetic war that is the use of military force. One can have a non-kinetic war, a war that is fought by ideas it's fought by these other different intangible elements. So and this is fought more in the informational in the cognitive space. And this differs from I mean not to say

that a culture war can actually turn into a actual physical war but this process that leads up to it. And looking at currently I mean you have these other different cultural aspects which are leading to increased conflict. I mean if we look now for example the us which is trying to gain international how would you call it conformism on Ukraine issue that is one problem because I mean this is going into the ideological component. And here you got two different approaches which will not end well if one side keeps on pushing the other. And that is that you have this western centric order which has become quite messianic that it's spreading this idea of western liberalism the values of that to other parts of the world this. And of course when we get into this part of the world the global south this starts to evoke some historical memory of other civilization civilizing missions of other countries which if we look at how these are portrayed whether it be Pax Britanica peace British peace. I mean one needs to ask peace for whom because I mean if we look here not far from here or even here this Bengal region in 1943 if you ask people in Europe what about this how has that got to do with pax Britannica what about these values which bell is expressing now the garden versus the jungle. And I although he did better that I give him he managed one better when he told at Latin American audience that, Latin America and Europe should build a new world just like the conquistadors. So he is capable of better. So but what I'll just start to wrap up here, I mean all of it's a very complex thing and it's also a very emotional thing and when we're looking at this western attempt to in this merry messianic ideological way to proselytize the rest of the world this end of history idea it's meeting another particular viewpoint I mean you got different viewpoints but the approach is rather different. Because you have a much more pragmatic approach one which is based on national interest and of each of those countries. So we can see how this is working currently with the us trying to pressure India in terms of reforming its stance on Ukraine. That can

be said as a culture war the and one can also talk about in the us this construct of the flyover zone this deplorables versus the how do they the deplorables.”

**Irfan Yar**, “Thank you very much I’m sure the audience must have a lot of question but we will have a Q&A session later on and I must say I really enjoy the silence it's a lot. And sometime even I got intimidated because it was too much silence and I really would love if you can continue this in our next two sessions tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, so I really appreciate the attention. Thanks again Professor Simon. Professor Ali Riaz if I use the terminology very loosely and if we can divide the culture war in progressive and orthodox we will find and we will see and observe that in most societies there is a powerful moment our institution, and in some countries those institution are very powerful. And they are the one defining and imposing let's say intellectual culture compulsory religious practices heterosexuality the way they want things are being imposed in those societies. On the other hand we have progressive viewpoint which does not really believe in the status score. They want to challenge it and they want to bring reforms in the society and the critic would argue that leftist or let's say those who are advocating for progressive view are changing the tradition the tradition which are essential to societies. For some societies maybe religion is the most important thing and maybe it's a little bit extreme but they would also critic that leftist are a progressive they are eradicating families institution too. So this you know two conflicting debates are going on, we feel it and it has been affecting the global politics as well. And what I would love to know from you and maybe the audience would also like to know that which of these competing you know debate is rising on the global level the floor is yours.”

Ali Riaz, “Thank you Irfan. After Professor Simon's introduction as to what cultural war means I will take a different route rather. You know it's a route that is less troubled let me put it this way. First of all coming from the United States where I live and incessantly hearing this culture war

thanks to Fox television and others. So to speak it seems to me there is a frame to understand but I would like to question that frame. This whole notion of the culture war the way and particularly today this conversation when we talking about the culture war, Professor Simon has mentioned the ideational part of it that ideology is one, but definitely it has an effective thing basically it become emotive things at one point or another. But before that when we are talking of culture wars there seems to be one thing particularly when today the notion of universalizing. As Irfan has pointed out that often we frame it is as if versus conservative versus progressive, orthodox versus liberal; this binary frame of understanding the culture seems to obliterate the gray area, completely obliterate the gray area. And I would love to be in that gray area I do not want to be in one of the boxes that has been created for me by someone else. Particularly the reason is this that the whole question of culture war stems from identity politics. I'm not trying to undermine the importance of identity politics, I do understand the role of the gender and ethnicity and being a minority in the United States despite the fact that it is a rainbow nation though it is called melting pot which I don't agree with I think it is a rainbow nation. And being a minority my identity matters I do understand that, I do understand the gender matters, I do understand you know there are other elements your faith matters your sexual orientation matters. Hence this identity politics has an importance to me I'm not undermining that. But when this identity politics has become instrumentalizing into a binary and universalized particularly when we are talking in the specific context the problem lies is first of all this entire binarization obliterate the gray area. And this is in my understanding that it is practically a trap created for you to walk into and frame yourself in understanding frame yourself in talking about as if there is an irreconcilable difference between you and I there isn't. There are areas that we can work together so those who are instrumentalizing this culture wars has a reason to do it and I think that is the politics of it. And perhaps given that

my own background is in political science and my proclivity to see everything through this prism of politics. I am overemphasizing the politics part of it but definitely what I see is this that the whole question of culture war emerges from a very furnished polarization and a deliberate furnishes polarization that would definitely benefit a certain group of individual or certain group in doing so. Christien has been mentioning with respect to the United States the republican and the democrat and as I see and please bear with me if you disagree please you can come back later. The entire effort of the republican party in the context of the United States over the last decade and perhaps more than that. They're succeeding better now in the last 10 years is simply putting me as a minority to one single identity, whether I am an American that's not the point the point to them is I'm an immigrant that my skin color seems to be brown as if that should be my identity. Is it my identity? Of course this is my identity, because I do belong to multiple identities and when this entity culture war things framed discussed debated and pointed out it is repeatedly been told in some form or other that I have to belong to a certain group, that I got to be something exclusively something whether that is my gender whether it is my sexual orientation or that could be plain and simple my skin color. That is where I have problem in discussing this as if it is devoid of that kind of you know devoid of making this as if it is the only thing this is how I should be seeing ourselves and others. And when I start to see others through this frame when I start to see someone with this other frame that the problem is this at least, that is how I see, first of all the war analogy itself is a problematic to me because- what you do in war is you annihilate your enemy. There is there is no other thing that you can do in war. Can you? Because your exist depends on the annihilation of the other. The constructor you construct the other as enemy put them that group particular group into one box erase the gray area then we see ourselves either black or white and then if I am black in somehow in some ways erasing the white is basically my existence leaves on. This creating this



existential threat which is a contrived one. It is absolutely contrived one that is the problematic part. So am I saying that there is no culture war or that the cultural differences are completely contrived? No, I'm not saying that I'm saying that framing it as war itself is problematic, universalizing it is a problematic. Particularly when we are defining it progressive versus liberal, let me take the case of others in the United States, we see it as if as if those who are the flag waving republicans are trying to tell me that I'm less patriotic than them. That is that is problematic patriotism has become a weapon, weaponization of patriotism and you can see that one in over nationalism not in Germany in 1930 but in 21st century in the United States as well as in Bangladesh. That your patriotism can be questioned if you do not agree to this hegemonic idea that has been produced by state. In society there are contesting ideas and that is the natural thing to do. But when state becomes part of it in creating an hegemonic idea and impose on us whether I'm in the United States you are in Germany in 1930s I don't know what is the situation today but nevertheless in case of you know Bangladesh at this point that is where I see the culture. If you call it cultural conflict or cultural you know contestation that is where it is. But I am I'm seriously sincerely uncomfortable in in using this war analogy this militaristic approach to it, annihilation approach to it, that you know and making it so effective in the sense of the emotive world then you don't see anything else then you don't actually consider other the this is the consequence. There are two consequence or two things that creates this kind of consequence, one is that you know a predatory identity a very predatory identity whether it is the nationalism it could well be the nationalism. So when there is a nationalism a certain interpretation of nationalism. If I question it, am I engaged in a culture war? Should I be actually think that okay it is oh jeez this is a culture war going on. That is how the those who are actually promoting a very defined and in some cases very dubiously defined and in some cases it is so flexible whatever they want to do however they

want to explain it they can extrapolate squeeze as it fits to their. Nationalism is defined as such in some places. If I question it am I engaged in what? No, I'm not engaged in what. I'm just questioning that and I have a right I have a right to question because I am the sovereign. As a sovereign if I have given some power to someone else as the state as we call it have given it with terms and conditions that I've not given it all together. This is an inalienable right that I have i've given it for a certain moment to certain individuals for managing it for certain time then I can question them count them. So all these things the way I see it there this you know this creation of binary creating this trap that I have to think it in that way and as if culture war is has to be progressive versus liberal orthodox, no, it's not. Multiplicity of identity should allow me to insist on various thing, say for example, yes you know as a us citizen with the Bangladeshi ethnicity with by faith Muslim and you know not so practicing unfortunately, can I not question the Americans the policies that yes I don't have to wave the flag and at my doorstep does that make it less patriotic about united states? Or by questioning the Bangladesh authority does it make it less of Bangladeshi origin Bangladeshi ethnicity with respect to my identity? It doesn't. Yes I'm a male. You know and I'm not going to talk about my sexual orientation wait you know if you're waiting for the next thing so please forget about that you know. But that is the point so I'm my position with respect to this and sorry for taking longer than you know longer than longer than we have times okay that gives me enough you so the my point is with respect to this conversation that, we need to ask that question, we need not to accept what is considered a conventional wisdom which has been you know for certain ways it has been propagated constructed and completely each and every time it is reproduced. In the context of the United States I'm talking about United States because I live there I you know I try to be part of part of the understanding the politics and deeply concerned where the US politics is going on you know. Some of my friends would not but that

doesn't matter it makes me extremely worried as to where the United States is heading in terms of his politics you know. Having said that my point is that you know let us question this, let us raise this thing that, war analogy in any context should be avoided, should be avoided, it gives a urgency it gives a very fascinating things yes you know. And then it creates it you know you can have either flag waving or muscle thumbing people yes you know because it is a war I'm going to win it. Please let us avoid it, war doesn't help if the answer is war then we are asking the wrong question. Let us ask the right question how the diversity how the multiple identities how the gray areas how can we reconcile accommodate see how do you do it? I have a very simple answer to this that is having a pluralist society. Well religion you question the religion question, the religion question state should not get into the religion question- how do you make it? If those who are suggesting that sharia should be the law or sharia should be practiced the as a matter of fact, what we describe as secular state is more you know conducive to practice if the moral underpinnings of sharia is there. If you think moral underpinings of Sharia is there in similar fashions the plurality the pluralism that would allow you that is what I consider as a democracy. What is democracy? Is it majoritarianism? To me democracy means that it should protect the minority I'm not talking in terms of the religious minority, I'm not talking about the ethnic minority, ideological everyone should be protected that is what democracy is all about. Democracy is not majoritarian rule. So if there is a pluralist society where you can have faith and you can also be allowed to have not faith having any faith. Be an atheist so be it let the state protect you because you are an atheist. That is your faith I believe that I don't believe in something, so what? In terms of ideology if I can if I can be in that position that I don't believe in any ideology why shouldn't I be in a situation that I don't believe in a religion. Or for that matter you know all things that can be accommodated within this broad motion of pluralist society. And there everyone would be on if you if you draw a spectrum

there should be one on the left on the right so be it, but some people like me who happens to be in the middle. There will be some people like me who actually really truly hates and I consciously use the word hate I don't like the word hate I hate to be boxed. You know why? Because boxes are suffocating, try yourself put in a box and shut the box and you see it is very suffocating very very suffocating. Ideological boxes is nothing different than that it is very suffocating. And that's why my point the central and the final point is that. Let us not talk about- what? Let us talk about diversity pluralism and allowing everyone to speak and be part of the society, that actually cherish the diversity. I'm not a single identity neither, are you thank you."

**Irfan Yar**, "Thank you very much Professor Riaz, for further elaborating the concept of culture war. And I think it's very unfortunate that no matter you know how much you are qualified for attaining certain documents. Let's say or whatever you will still be treated as a second class or at least you know not fully confirm today social group or identity. And very unfortunately politician have left no stone unturn you know to use or politicize be it religion, be it race or whatever and even the way you look. And it remind me of the time when I used to live in India even though I am from Afghanistan but as a student I could hardly afford you know my daily things but when I used to go outside they would the shopkeepers or whoever they would tell me white people price and then I have to tell them do I may look white but I'm from Afghanistan and they wouldn't believe but then I have to argue with them so sometime you know it can be played both ways everywhere. Thanks again. I'm coming to my final panelist here Professor Christine Fair. Personally I believe that the lack of understanding and the lack of knowledge or lack of let's say intolerance toward different beliefs and culture can sometime you know put us or bring huge catastrophes. And I'm giving you some example for example, when the United States disloyal the Taliban regime in early 2000 there was a huge lack of knowledge from Afghanistan. And they

had worsen the 20 years of war in Afghanistan. So this is just one example. In maybe in a more let's say you know a dumb perspective in the Middle East you know the masculinity consist is very (you know) like clearly and people take pride on them. And when Saddam was asked do you have (you know) weapons of mass destruction and even though there is research he did not have that but he was like “Dude I have it you know”. And guess what happened it led to a lot of you know destruction in the Middle East. (is there something uncomfortable for?, “No, okay thanks I've been up since 4:00 a.m.”, well yeah I know the feeling I say. I'm in your shoes but I'll make it shorter. So my question is how this lack of understanding and the intolerance to a different culture can influence security? The floor is yours.”

**Christine Fair**, “Well I'm not going to talk about that at all because I don't accept the premise of the alleged question. So I really agree with everything that Ali Raza said, but I got to be honest with you I actually find this term culture war to be demeaning and offensive. Because in the context of the United States this is not a culture war, we have one political party that has been captured by extremists who reject the foundations of our constitution. Now I would also argue that's because they are not capable of reading the Constitution with comprehension. And I'm not that's not a joke right the if you actually try to read our Constitution and you look at the American literacy which is about a sixth grade reading level the people who are tearing apart our Constitution in the name of protecting our constitution can't actually read the damn thing. So we have one political party and I'm going to back this up with data because I'm an empiricist but this whole culture war thing you ask me am I upset I find the whole thing tedious and offensive. We have one party that irrespective of what box you're put in they want to deprive you of your civil liberties. Which our constitution enshrines and for the past many decades we have been trying to expand upon civil liberties to make the promise of America more realized than not. And we have a one party so the

thing I hate about culture war is it brings bullshit of both sides, right I am sorry but both sides are not equivalent. One side wants to take away my decisions about what I do with my womb. One side wants to decide that he is not an equal citizen based upon a variety of categories, one side says that we're prolife well they support every goddamn thing with a gun, right. This is not a culture war this is this is a war about what we are and what our institutions mean, okay. So culture war makes it sound as if you know we're all mambi pambi we're just arguing over who gets to use what bathroom. No we are actually arguing over whether I am an equal citizen to a white Christian male whether Ali is equal to a white Christian male. And this is not a cultural war people this is a war over law this is a war over legal interpretation, this is a retrenchment from the promise of what our constitution has. By the way I'm also tired of hearing about our founding fathers it took 19 amendments for me to get the right to vote so clearly the founding fathers had some problems. And even as Thomas Jefferson wrote all men are created equal he was enslaving human beings raping the people he enslaved and he was selling those enslaved persons like chattel. So I don't want you to get the illusion that I hold our founding fathers in any sort of prestige I do not, right. But let me talk about data because primarily you just got me pissed off with all this culture war but let me talk about data because I'm an empiricist and I'm a proud positivist. So when we started understanding why people were voting for Trump, many of my colleagues were like 'Oh it's economic anxiety'. Well you know what I'm from a rural part of Indiana and I told those elite west coast east coast people it is not economic anxiety and if you ever left your cynic cures of the coast you would understand this. These people are afraid that white people in particular are not going to be running the show. They are afraid that white people will actually have to stand in line and wait their turn behind everyone else like a civilized person, right. This is really what's going on and people went no I think we have to engage their econ sensitivities. I think we have enough evidence

to show that this is not economic sensitivity this is about white Christian nationalism. How do I know this? There have been numerous data studies that have asked people a number of simple questions- who did you vote for in the last election, right? Then it we were asked a series of questions about- how much do you support the principles of democracy? Also they were asked economic questions and their beliefs about the economy. And here's what the data actually showed those- who supported the republican candidate of Donald Trump were less likely to support democracy than those who voted for Hillary Clinton. Why is this important? Because this actually this very basic statistical finding under geared what so many of us have fought. Because if you actually look at the power distribution in the United States, Republicans have captured significant institutions notably the court and in those states that are held by republicans they have gerrymandered into irrelevance brown, black and poor people, right. And they have used voter registration restrictions to make it harder for black, brown and poor people to vote. And if that isn't offensive enough and I suggest to you it is they even limit where polling stations are to make it even more difficult. On top of that our voting day is not a public holiday it's on a goddamn Tuesday. So if you look at where poor people who also often but not always happen to be black and brown, how many hours it takes for them to vote those are hours that they aren't working. So the entire system is designed to privilege a certain sector of the electorate. That's one side and the other side says no, everyone should be allowed to vote you shouldn't be allowed to gerrymander or black brown and poor people out of existence. So this is not a culture war people this is a war over, law this is a war over enfranchisement, this is a war over one person one vote because in many places it is a war over one person no vote. So calling this a culture war offends me to my core. So the data are really clear why do Republicans support less democracy it's because they can't win a fair fight. This is also very clear when you look at their behavior. So it's very nice when quantitative data

based upon large surveys of American voting behavior happen to align with observe behavior. But here's a funny thing so several years ago Dr. Ali Riaz and I we did a survey here in Bangladesh. And I generally do survey work I like survey work I like crunching data I feel comfortable speaking to data. So there's this large debate in the scholarly literature about Islam and democracy, right. It kind of goes back to Samuel Huntington's nonsense that you know Muslims in democracy can't coexist blah blah blah. So we when we did this survey thanks to Ali Riaz we had a democracy battery. Which is you know basic support for your rights, freedom of speech, right to assemble property rights and this is basically taken from the freedom index, right. We also created indices for secularism which is the distance keeping religion out of the state or in the case of Bangladesh equidistance to all faiths and we also had an index for support for political Islam or Sharia. So we did the number crunching, a couple of fascinating findings left out. Do you know who supported de democracy the most? Who thinks the secularist supported democracy?- anyone, anyone signing up the secularist hearted democracy- anyone? Anyone? Come on don't be chickens hell no. Do you know who like the democracy the most- Islamist. Do you know why it's the same reason? Why the republicans don't want true democracy? Because the secularists don't want a fair fight because if there was a fair fight the Islamist might come back to power. The Islamists much like the American democrats so ironic, want more democracy because if there were a fair fight they would actually do fairly well at the polls. So whoever thought that Bangladeshi Islamists would want more democracy? But it turns out the mechanism is the same, when you are being deprived your right to vote it doesn't matter whether you are an Islamist or whether you're an American democrat you want access to more democracy. So this isn't about culture, this is about law this is about who gets to exercise their rights and who doesn't and calling this a cultural war quite frankly



just it makes me want to drink. Thank you.” thank you very much cheers to all the democracy lovers in the room cheers and it doesn't have to be halal it can be a halal beverage too.”

Irfan, “Thank you very much for your perspective. But I think whatever you touched upon was like very practical things that we see in our daily lives. I’m not a scholar but I really have a great respect for good scholars and whatever you mention I think can be memorize is culture war, thank you very much for this very exciting conversation and I’m really honored to be among you guys. Since it's a very informer former you know discussion now we can use words that we want even though which I don't like. But a good round of applause. Now we are coming to Q&A session and if you have any question feel free to ask and please identify whom would you like to ask this question. The hard job so we can start from you gentlemen.”

Question one, “Hi good evening I’m Professor Parvez Karim Abbasi an economist by profession guilty. Based on the questions or the discussion that we have just heard and again any discussion of Professor Christine Fair two things would be there. One enough food for thought and enough profanities to kick you out of your boredom she has not changed over time, but then again she does this in good spirit nothing else. Just a observation and I won't take too much of time, we were talking about the United States as we rightly should but if you look into the founding mythos of America it was found by Puritans. White Christians who could not integrate with the more moderate church of England and the way that they took out basically the American Indian population or the first born population of this is the hallmark of the United States of America one of the reasons why the US War of Independence was fought was because they did not agree to the British basically taking over French occupied land whereby there would not be any slavery introduced. So the founding fathers I agree with you were also moved by cupidity and it's very ironical that the republican party led by honest ab. Lincoln now that was basically supporting black

emancipation and the fact end of the war. The question is right now- are the republicans the upholders of a white Christian value which they think they are under threat and that's that is that why they are linking up to the white republican voters? Do they think that the white Christian values on which the United States of America was founded is under threat? That's the question.

**Christine Fair**, “So I have data on this right so my colleague and I we've crunch some data because we're interested in this comparative piece. So overwhelmingly white men voted for Trump right so one way of interpreting this is that they were voting for greater access to white privilege or protecting white privilege. About half of the women who cast votes who were white voted for Trump. So we can understand this in two ways the first way is they want greater access to white privilege also white women they've always been a problem right. When white women were arguing I mean white American women were arguing for the right to vote. They weren't arguing for the rights of black women to vote. When black women mobilized for enfranchise it's for all women. So if we have civil liberties it's because some black woman got the job done that's just a fact. White women didn't get the stuff it was black women who got it done. So then we look at black men all right. So about 60% of black men voted for Trump, yes right. Now what's going on there they want access to male privilege, right. Black women were the only one who said oh hell no, right. They're the only ones so Biden won because of black women right. Because the voting patterns more or less remain the same right. So going to your point, I do want to correct your history our first sin was actually slavery not genocide. Because we actually use our slaves to further genocide right. Well it wasn't we actually did use our slaves to expand into the West so it's not chicken and egg it was actually history. But the legacy of structural white supremacy perdures in every single one of our institutions. Whether you're looking at policing, policing originated in capturing escape slaves. If you look at the real estate market the same house that I own, if it's in a

black neighborhood is already depreciated by 30%. And the families who enslaved people have multiple generations of intergenerational wealth transfer. The families of those who are enslaved have not only that they have intergenerational debt transfer, right. So when people say that slavery was a long time ago why do we still care about it, for those of us who argue for social justice. You can't say it doesn't matter when every single one of our institutions is affected by it. We literally had a supreme court that says- in private colleges you can't select a class based upon other attributes other than merit. But it did not strike down legacies. And legacies are basically affirmative action for stupid white people who had a relative that went to some college it is nothing to do with their qualifications or their merit right. And when people say racism you know we shouldn't be harping about it I say screw you because you're a white person, only a white person could have the terminating to make that claim. So this is not about a culture war, this is about fulfilling the promise of our legal institutions. And if you want to trivialize that as a cultural war then bro I don't know. We have to do a push-up match.”

**Ali Riaz**, “May I add,? Okay, thank you. Let me just interject on one issue, in phrasing your question. You mentioned values, white Christian values, right? (as in church by the American) what exactly is that values in 21st century? Absolutely nothing. Living in the United States for 30 plus years I can say you this is simply wrapping up something that doesn't exist. So this is what the American media unfortunately including the New York Times & Washington Post has practically put in your mouth then you have swallowed it- digested it and now telling us back. It's not there's nothing called white Christian values, because if you look at Christine mentioned about some of the data but I'm not going to get into the data at this point despite the fact that I have some inclination and I'm very bad in math so that's the one of the other reason that I don't go into the number game. But most important point here and this is relate to what we're talking today it's not

about the United States two things here I would like to make. And this is not against you please don't take it personally my point is given that you we so close I could take pick on it I mean my my point is this, that the notion of these values as if it is an homogenized thing itself is problematic. Am I being a Muslim should I add to certain values that has been told by someone that I should or for that matter as an immigrant should I actually be adhering to certain values that I am told, should be there's nothing called homogeneous values and precisely over the last 15-20 years what we have seen in case of the United States, thanks to those who actually want to perpetuate in very you know unequal system. They are the one who is actually manufacturing this. The entire criminal justice system is so lopsided and so institutionally made into anti-black, anti-immigrant and anti-hispanic so let us talk about it. And this is not a place to talk about the us system I'm not going to get into this and especially having other Americans present you know and not so American present who might have a difference with me. That's why my point with respect to this why and how that is related to what we are discussing today universalizing the culture war frame itself is problematic. In the name of nationalism it can be done that you can questioning nationalism. To me again I'm not trying to impose- questioning the nationalism is the first job of a patriot? Question nationalism until and unless you can question nationalism and any kind of interpretation to it your patriotism is rather a suspect. And that is what is not happening that is when I do it in the United States someone may point 'Oh you just an immigrant that's why you questioning'- no, I'm equal American that's why I'm asking that question. Here again my friends and Bangladesh here is my call to you if it is a call make it a call question the nationalism first because that has become the coin to sell something that is detrimental to the national interest to your own well-being and the future of this countries. In the name of nationalism plundering the future cannot be tolerated should

not be tolerated whether it is in the United States by the Republican or here I'm not going to name the name the rest you know how to translate that one, thank you.

Question two, "Thank you, can I? My name is Aminul Karim, sir I'm a Bangladeshi I'm a Bengali I'm a Muslim and I come from mango grown areas of Bangladesh and I'm brown I've got two points for Prof. Ali Riaz so one is and also for Christian one of them. You think the melting pot concept is not working well in America number one question and number two is nationalism concept. You said it's not militaristic but if you think compare China and Japan they always on the war footing on nationalism Japan Korea they're always on the war footing Pakistan India is always on the war footing and because of nationalism as a student of military science I feel nuclear weaponization has been done in South Asia because of nationalism that's your comment sir thank you.

**Ali Riaz**, "Let me quickly explain if you allow me. When I say I don't subscribe to this melting pot because the whole notion of melting pots tell me that I will have to give up my you know basic traits and you know cultural distinctiveness to become something else. What that something else? What is melting pot? You put everything then something else comes up, right? Why that has to be and what is that other thing that comes up? In case of the United States this other this whole notion of whole notion of melting pot was what would come out is assimilation. That it would basically be shaped by the dominant and possibly hegemonic not necessarily because they have actually used question. So what is that, that is basically a white you know dominant culture that or white dominant you know characteristics that I will have to adjust to it that is the same thing has happened in case of Europe and particularly in the United Kingdom where I have lived for quite a few years and I've seen it this is my personal experience of that's why I say the melting pot. I'm not saying whether it is working or not my understanding is that United States is a rainbow nation

because that is where the Hispanic community is there that is where the Asian community is there then all of them constitute what the United States actually means at least to me. Most of the people might not agree with me so be it thank you. What was the second question with respect to nationalism I understand I do recall that in the name of nationalism that is exactly my point a country a country which cannot afford to have bathroom for everyone has more than 10 nuclear weapons. Do I have to tell the country's name? No sorry, it is called India. It is called India you know and I'm not I have not come to Pakistan yet, you know and you know what's the situation of Pakistan in a contestation with this whole notion of this asymmetric you know idea that they're going to challenge the India so they have to have nuclear weapons. So in the name of nationalism I mean just because Japan did it so I have to think that it is a great thing. Sorry, I cannot go there because in the name of nationalism we have seen what happens either at the level of war but most importantly it actually rationalizes irrational act. Most of the time nationalism practically rationalize irrational act, I know these are hard things to swallow in some sometimes but please think sometime- what has happened in the name of nationalism. In the context of the United States, yes the war of independence, in the context of Bangladesh it's not a questioning the war of independence. Distinct tendency and other things but if you look at the basic draft basic document of Bangladesh foundation what do you see- there are promises the promises were you know those are the things that has established Bangladesh equality, social justice, rights. It is not about nationalism it is about equality, social justice. Has it been mobilized Bangladesh is for the war of independence? Of course, it's a mobilization true but accepting it that this is only thing nationalism will drive us. It doesn't do good it may help you to get the weapons and justify that Pakistan should have all the nuclear weapons that would save them from god knows what, you know, who's going

to take Pakistan away? I don't know but my point is- don't waste that time and money on that. Rather build a bathroom for a decent hygienic nation so on.

**C. Christine Fair**, “I agree with everything that he says except the nuclear issue I don't think is nationalism. So I mean for those of you who are aware of this concept of the security dilemma. Unfortunately when India correctly views its long-term strategic threat as China, China is a nuclear weapon state it's a permanent nuclear weapon state. You will recall that China defeated India in 1962 and India and China continues to make territorial ingresses you know on territory that India holds. So no nuclear weapon states the permanent nuclear weapon states under the NPT honor their commitment right to roll back and eliminate by the way that's never going to happen there's absolutely no resolution to the nuclearization of the subcontinent. And in fact what we see is a continue evolution of doctrine, right. So India wants to have a cold start doctrine to punish Pakistan for terrorist attacks Pakistan innovates right by introducing tactical nuclear weapons. It's a terrible name there's no such thing as a tactical new weapon they're all strategic. So this cannot be attributed to nationalism but everything else Ali says I completely agree with. Nothing good comes out of nationalism and when I see people on Twitter with flag in their profile I block them preemptively because I know they're rubbish they will spew, thank you very much.”

**Gregory Simons**, “Okay now I think it's time for gasoline to be thrown on this one and to up the thing. I tend to agree with Iran on culture wars because if we look at voting laws and franchisement disenfranchisement these are not evidence that culture don't exist. They are instruments of culture wars so that one prevails over the other and to give advantage to one side over the other and okay so media exaggerate. Of course, media sells exaggeration, does it mean culture wars don't exist? No it does not and yeah I mean on this nationalism, I would not say that nationalism perceive I mean I agree with the premise but it's not a rational argument it is an emotional justification to

prime and mobilize people in a binary fashion to ensure that a non-kinetic culture war escalates, thank you very much.”

Question three, “My question is basically I would slightly differ from the two panelists Professor Ali and Christine. Cultural war does exist for me, and therefore my question to all the panelists is it/ has it actually it's not the cultural wall it's basically the nationalism that has replaced by the cultural war? Cultural war it's a new term for the nationalism. And one more thing to Christianity I mean I would agree with that Islam believes in democratic values. And Islam is also against the nation concept of nationalism there is no space for nationalism in Islam so in that way Islam is more progressive to may the other cultures and religions.”

Question four, “Thank you very much my name is Asif, so my question is to Christine because thanks for your very powerful presentation. It was really energizing however as from an academic point of view since you have made a very big claim about the Islamists are more democratic than the secularist and you referred a survey. So my question from that point is this is the survey published in any referred journal first of all? Second since you have like implicated these results in a larger population then of course from the data point of view we need to look into the samples so what was the sample size you looked into and based on that how you are claiming that it's a general phenomena? The third and the last question actually is that so in the context what do we see and Professor Riaz also wrote a book on it where all the good elections that we had not the problematic elections but the good elections, the data shows that the Islamist that if we think they got the vote less than 10% it's approximately 4 to 5%. So since we have a larger set of data how your data can counter that already existing like voting based predictions, that's it? Can I just take the liberty in eight to question what he said and then maybe you can answer that too personally I'm also very curious to study the finding that you and Professor are made and I'm curious to know whether that



specific data where Bangladesh Muslim more Muslim oriented people support democracy more is that let's say generalizable or applicable to other societies for example Afghanistan where people have and still a big portion of the society has allergy with term democracy the US did like for two decades a lot of effort you know it's soldier blood showers billions of dollar but it couldn't impose democracy there and this was mainly because people had the like up understanding what a democracy is? So I'm just curious whether this can be generalized or no?"

Question five, "Thank you very much I'm Zahed Khan my current affiliation is American international university Bangladesh and also University of Reading UK. It's good to see my beloved Professor in the chair whom I've known for about 12 years 13 years now. So I'm really tempted my discipline is politics and international relations and I'm really tempted to sort of get the response from the very distinguished panelist of one aspect taking this debate into a systemic level from a political science and international relations point of view. And let me explain the question here we see a rise or a claim or reclaim and amplifying the claim of some state being a civilizational state. China has always claimed to be a civilizational state, India is reclaiming and amplifying and Russia has been in the past but what we also see in the West is they don't claim it to be a civilizational state but it's sort of universal civilization. In which is underpinned by the narrative of development, consumerism, a little bit of capitalism in most cases. So now from a systemic level of point of view and when I'm saying systemic I'm actually referring to if you're a realist world's structural realism or if you're a constructivist can so, on from that point of view do you see the rise of this civilizational state does two things first does it automatically sort of reinforce nationalism narrative in the domestic and does it automatically make the international order a future international order more chaotic as this civilizational state becomes more powerful? Thank you."

**C. Christine Fair**, “Thank you. So I’m gonna very quickly address the data so I only present the results I only present the results of peer review. You can go to my website Christine Fair. Net and the particular article is called ‘The Rational Islamist of Bangladesh’ was published in politics and religion which is the official section of the American political science association. So regarding the data obviously we paid attention to that because we’re scientists we’re not clowns the sample size is over 8,000 it’s representative at the division level so yeah so to your point this is a scientifically sound sample I kind of know what I’m doing for a living but thank you for questioning my credentials maybe it’s because I’m a lady and you’re a dude I don’t know but I’m pretty sure I have more peer reviewed publications than you do I’m just going to put that out there. All right so going to the important point that was raised and to the question that you raised is probably not generalizable. Because what’s interesting about the Jamat Islami is that it’s the only political party that’s truly democratic in this country and in Pakistan, right. The two mainstream parties are dynastic fiefdoms of vertically integrated kleptocratic enterprises. So whether you like it or not Jamat Islami is actually a democratic party, right. To your point that I don’t know why you think that the people who have a preference for Islamism are only Jamatis. Because after all who was their coalition partner the BNP which is right of center right. So to your question I don’t think this finding can be generalized because it has a lot to do with the capture of state institutions by Her Highness and the complete fragrant manner with which he has rigged elections and so in any arena if you are a right of center party if there were free and fair elections you would fair better than you do in the current situation. So I don’t think this is generalizable in any way shape or form it has the most similar analogy is with the republican party in the United States, right. Because they cannot win a fixed fight. So in the same way that the Awami League and its secularist allies

support so the analogy which is the closest is to other parties that prefer autocracy because they can't win a fixed fight. And it in the data that I've worked on."

**Gregory Simons**, "Nationalism, your point there is it a culture? Well it can be argued that it is. Because there are certain values and identities which are put into nationalism and as Christine says this cannot be generalized it's very heterogeneous and depending on the a whole bunch of circumstances. So I mean if we look at well the rise of Nazi Germany in the 1930s I mean that nationalism was absolutely a culture war. You had an other and you had this very toxic culture which sought to erase the other culture and by all means."

**Ali Riaz**, "Can I respond to the last question that has raised with respect to this civilizational states, right? That's being lately been propagated but China has been talking about this for a long time. Lately India particularly Mr. Modi has been this has been the argument that India is a civilization by itself civilizational state. Will that translate the nationalism question or not? I don't think that would. As a matter of fact the civilizational argument seems to be on the very foundation that I am trying to question here about this cultural argument. The book that has made so much money out of it of Mr. Samuel Huntington I can assure you if I had written it nobody would have published it because. It is completely flawed methodologically and I've been saying it about it. I mean had it not been written by mr samuel Huntington it if it had been written by Olivia I'm sure no publish so dare publishing it? You know but despite the fact that I have published quite a few books it's not that this would have been my and you know there have been university presses are published as well. I mean why the point is this? The point of this with respect to Mr. Huntington's book as well as others you know, is that framing that as a civilizational issue it undermines the very basic notion of the evolution of state. Had it been the civilization then why India is a state? Why China is a state if it is a civilization why is not calling itself empire? Why this because the modern state

itself despite all its limitations and everything. Modern state itself its evolution which is an unending process. But the modern state's evolution itself has some elements to it and that would remain so these arguments are just rhetoric in the sense of getting into this conversation and it's not going to shape change the international relations in the coming years possibly not in decades beyond that I won't be here so, who cares? Thank you.

**C. Christine Fair**, “And I will just conclude by saying even though I’m not in a position to say whether the clash of civilization was a great work or not but I’m really curious and keen to know that why so many scholar have cited him and probably I think that is the most cited book when it come to culture war. So it's a paradox (yeah it is a paradox I do ask my students to read it doesn't mean that I discounted it but it doesn't make just because it has been read doesn't mean that it is actually correct). True I agree thank you very much. Please join me in a big round of applause for we're exciting thank you very much audience for your attention.”