

Critical Book Review

Abstract

After the end of the Cold War, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the collapse of the USSR in 1989 – 1991, the whole world could breathe a sigh of relief and turn a new page in its history. Peoples and nations of Eastern Europe could finally feel and gain freedom and independence. The United States did not have to compete with the other super state anymore. It was the end of the bipolar world. “In the post-Cold War world, for the first time in history, global politics has become multipolar and multicivilizational” (Huntington, 1996). In its turn, new questions were raised among politicians and political scientists: How would the world develop now? What conflicts could occur in a new multipolar world? Who would be participants of conflicts: nations, national states, groups of states, cultures, civilizations or others? Samuel P. Huntington published an article titled “*The Clash of Civilizations?*” (1993) in the influential *Foreign Affairs* journal, where he provided answers to the above-mentioned questions. Later on he developed and expanded his thesis in the book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996).

Keywords: clash of civilizations, new world order, the Cold War, the Middle East, Islam.

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The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order (1996) is an expansion of the 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article written by Samuel P. Huntington (Harvard political scientist), in response to Francis Fukuyama's book *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), where Huntington analyzes a new post-Cold War order. The main thesis of Huntington's is that the most important distinctions among peoples are no longer ideological, political, economic, etc.; they are cultural. Moreover, this cultural diversity will become the primary source of conflicts among peoples, nations, and states in a new global world; new conflicts will occur along the boundaries of different cultures (Huntington, 1996).

Huntington divides his book into five parts/sections, in which he provides his main thesis (Huntington, 1996).

In the first part of the book *A World of Civilizations*, the author surveys different theories about the global political order and global politics in the post-Cold War period. He thinks all these theories have been ineffective in explaining or predicting the reality of the new world of the end of the 20th century. Besides that, Huntington writes about serious drawbacks of the already existing paradigms. For example, a number of theorists argued that liberal democracy and capitalist free market economy had become the only remaining alternative for nations in the post-Cold War world. F. Fukuyama believed that the world had reached the 'end of history'; He believed that there were not any other prospects of further world development (Fukuyama, 1992). In response to Fukuyama, Huntington argued that the world had only turned back to a normal state of affairs, which was, however, characterized by cultural conflicts (Huntington, 1996). It is true to a certain extent: It has always been difficult for peoples with different cultures to cooperate and even simply communicate with each other.

In the first part of the book, Huntington also divides the world into eight major civilizations (Huntington, 1996). They are: Western (centered in Europe and North America), Orthodox (centered in Russia, separate from Western Christendom), Islamic (originating on the Arabian Peninsula, spread across North Africa, Iberian Peninsula, and Central Asia), Hindu (identified as the core Indian civilization), Japanese (Japanese culture as distinctively different from the rest of Asia), Sinic (the common culture of China and Chinese communities in Southeast Asia; includes Vietnam and Korea), Latin American (Central and South American countries; most of countries are of Catholic majority), Africa (the continent lacks a sense of pan-African identity, though, Huntington argues that Africans are still increasingly developing a sense of African Identity). On analyzing this division, we may see that it is generally right.

Huntington also describes the relations between civilizations. Before 1500 AD, civilizations were separated geographically; the spread of technologies and ideas took centuries. Talking about the 20th century, the author writes that relations between civilizations developed under the influence of Western civilization (Huntington, 1996). Western civilization was also influenced by smaller, less powerful civilizations around the world.

The second part of the book *The Shifting Balance of Civilizations* begins with Huntington's arguing that Western power and influence is fading (Huntington, 1996). On the one hand, the West still has a monopoly on technological research and development, military and economic strength; on the other hand, the relative power and influence of Western countries is declining.

Huntington also analyzes the increased role and importance of religion in world politics, which (religion) has filled the vacuum created by the loss of political ideology (Huntington, 1996). He writes that "people need new sources of identity, new forms of stable

community, and new sets of moral precepts to provide them with a sense of meaning and purpose” (Huntington, 1996). We may agree that religion is able to meet these needs.

Huntington also focuses on Japan, China, and the Four Tigers (Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore) as the countries with the ability to successfully develop without adopting Western values.

Talking about Muslim societies, the author of *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996) argues that they reject Western culture; Islam is the primary factor that distinguishes Muslim politics, and that is definitely true.

In the next section of the book *The Emerging Order of Civilizations*, Huntington writes that in the post-Cold War world, countries are no longer able to easily categorize themselves and have entered into an identity crisis. Due to this, countries started “rallying to those cultures with similar religion, language, values, and institutions, and distance themselves from those with different ones” (Huntington, 1996). As a result, a number of regional organizations have been formed: the European Union, ASEAN, NAFTA, and so on. Huntington also describes the so-called “torn countries” like Russia, Turkey, or Mexico, which have not created an identity yet.

The fourth part of the book *Clashes of Civilizations* is devoted to the description and prediction of the great clashes that will occur among different civilizations from Huntington’s point of view. The author argues that Islamic countries will work and cooperate in a coalition against a common enemy, the West; they will work together in order to prevent the Western cultural hegemony (Huntington, 1996). The author predicts the conflict between the West and Islam to be “a small, fault line war” (Huntington, 1996).

Talking about fault line conflicts, it is important to mention that, according to Huntington, these conflicts occur between states belonging to different civilizations; they

may also occur within states that are home to populations from different civilizations ('torn countries').

Huntington provides us with a brief historical explanation of the conflict nature of Islam and Christianity. The author also writes about an antagonistic relationship between America and Asian countries (for example, China) as a result of economic development of the latter, which could also be one of the sources of another world conflict (Huntington, 1996).

Turning back to the description of Islam, it is necessary to mention that one of the most controversial statements of Huntington's in his book is that "Islam has bloody borders" (Huntington, 1993). He writes that conflict along the fault line between Western and Islamic civilizations has been going on for 1300 years, and this centuries-old military interaction between the West and Islam is unlikely to decline, which also has a number of serious reasons (for example, the West's attempt to universalize values and institutions, and maintain military superiority has generated intense resentment within Muslim communities). The view that all civilizations should adopt Western values infuriated Islamic fundamentalists, which can be observed nowadays (Steinberger, 2002). Besides that, according to Huntington, both Islam and Christianity have the same characteristics: They are both missionary religions, seeking conversions of others; they are "all-or-nothing" religions (it is believed by both sides that only their faith is the correct one); their values and beliefs represent the goals of existence and purpose in human existence (Huntington, 1996). However, there is a difference, for example, in the motto of HAMAS (Palestinian Islamist political party, based on the principles of Islamic fundamentalism): "We welcome death". It runs contrary to the values of Jews and Christians who welcome life, which is the greatest value.

Huntington also writes: "In Eurasia the great historic fault lines between civilizations are once more aflame. This is particularly true along the boundaries of the crescent-shaped

Islamic bloc of nations from the bulge of Africa to central Asia. Violence also occurs between Muslims, on the one hand, and Orthodox Serbs in the Balkans, Jews in Israel, Hindus in India, Buddhists in Burma, and Catholic in the Philippines. Islam has bloody borders” (Huntington, 1993). From Nigeria to Sudan, Pakistan, Indonesia, Philippines, and so on, some of the worst, most hate-driven violence in the world today is perpetrated by Muslims and in the name of Islam (Steinberger, 2002). That is why, as Huntington says, Islam has ‘bloody borders’, and this is terrible.

Besides the points mentioned above, Huntington writes about the Afghan War and the First Gulf War, which are defined by the author as the emergence of civilization wars. He provides us with an explanation of this thesis: The Afghan War was seen as the first successful resistance to a foreign power, and the First Gulf War was a Muslim conflict in which the West intervened (Huntington, 1996).

Huntington also gives a description of characteristics and dynamics of fault line conflicts: They often take place between people of different religions; they have prolonged duration; they are violent in nature, and so on (Huntington, 1996).

In the last section of the book *The Future of Civilizations*, the author writes about the challenges of the West, about the future role of the West, and about the future of the Western civilization on the whole. He describes external (emerging cultural identities in the non-Western world) and internal (erosion of principal values, moral, and beliefs) challenges. Huntington also argues that “the greatest threat to world peace and an international order” is the West clashing with another civilization (Huntington, 1996).

Another main point of view of the author of *The Clash of Civilizations* is that peoples and states that belong to different cultures should cooperate with each other, but not fight against one another in order to achieve cultural hegemony. Huntington argues that “a multicultural world is unavoidable because global empire is impossible” (Huntington, 1996).

“For the relevant future, there will be no universal civilization, but instead of world of different civilizations, each of which will have to learn to coexist with others” (Huntington, 1993). It would be truly great for the whole world if all the peoples, nations, and states, which belong to different civilizations, understood and accepted this reality. Perhaps, there would be fewer or even no ‘fault line conflicts’ in the world, but a simple cooperation. It sounds utopian, though.

Huntington has fallen under criticism of various academic writers, who have refused his claims historically, ideologically and so on. For example, Robert Marks does not agree with the Library of Congress’ classification of Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* as “history” either in scope or in method (Marks, 2000).

Jonathan Fox argued that Huntington failed to predict the reality of the new post-Cold War world (Fox, 2005).

Amartya Sen criticizes Huntington in his work *Identity and Violence: The illusions of destiny*, writing about Huntington’s main concept of an inevitable clash along civilization lines. He argues that violence occurs when individuals see each other as having a singular affiliation, as opposed to multiple affiliations. He also writes that diversity is the feature of most cultures in the world, and Western civilization is not an exception (Sen, 2006).

Paul Berman offers another criticism of Huntington’s civilization clash thesis in his work *Terror and Liberalism* (2003). He argues that distinct cultural boundaries do not exist nowadays. According to Berman, there is neither Islamic civilization, nor Western civilization; the evidence for a civilization clash is not convincing, especially when considering relationships between, for example, the United States of America and Saudi Arabia. Besides that, Berman states that many Islamic extremists have spent a significant amount of time living and/or studying in the Western world (Berman, 2003). However, due to

the points mentioned above, it is difficult to say that Berman's theses are strong enough to fully reject Huntington's points of view.

Another scientist who criticizes Huntington is Edward Said, an outspoken proponent of Arab issues. He depicted his response to Huntington's thesis in his *The Clash of Ignorance* (2001). He argues that there is a serious gap in Huntington's categorization of civilizations, and it is true to a certain extent: Huntington omits the dynamic interdependency and interaction of cultures. Edward Said also argues that the clash of civilizations thesis is an illustration "of the purest invidious racism, a sort of parody of Hitlerian science directed today against Arabs and Muslims" (Said, 2001).

As it can be seen, Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* has provoked a strong discussion among political scientists and politicians as well, which is not surprising. Huntington's work has a number of serious theses, which are convincing enough. That is why his article (1993) and later on his book (1996) were that much influential. Moreover, it still raises many questions concerning the world order, global politics and other processes, which are taking place in the world nowadays. For example, taking into consideration the situation in the Middle East today, we may find a number of answers concerning the "bloody borders" of Islam, which has been already mentioned above.

Another example can be the Arab-Israeli conflict, which has been lasting for six decades. Can it be called "a clash of civilizations" (Muslims and Jews, Arabic states and Israel)? It definitely can. This war has been troubling the whole world for more than half a century, and is unlikely to finish. New conflicts are still appearing between Jews and Muslims, between Israel and Palestine every day, people in the countries are separated (especially, in Palestine), political leaders cannot find any proper solution to any crucial problem, and so on and so forth. Moreover, all these events are happening on the Holy Land, where peoples of both religions live.

Talking about the war in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, etc., we may also witness the clash of Western and Muslim civilizations (Simon, 2006). Of course, it is not the main reason for or source of wars, but it adds fuel to the fire. By and large, we may say that the region of the Middle East has seen violence like no other region in the world.

In general, Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996) is an extremely interesting and fascinating book to read. It helps to understand a number of events happening in the present time, especially in the Middle East. The author provides an explanation of differences between Islam and Christianity; He states the reasons for the conflict between these two world religions, showing us their similarities as well as differences. Besides that, he categorizes the world civilizations due to proper characteristics and describes the clashes between these civilizations happening today, and which are possible in the future. Of course, in general, Huntington's theses cannot be treated as a paradigm in political sciences. However, he provides us with important facts about and analysis of the new world order and the new reality of world politics.

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