

# Is the World Ready to Overcome the Thesis of the Clash of Civilizations?\*

István Lakatos\*\*

## Abstract

*The article provides a critical overview of the Clash of Civilizations theory by Samuel Huntington, but in this context it also addresses two other important books also aimed at finding the correct answers to the new challenges of the post-Cold War era; Huntington's work was also an answer to their thesis. They are Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man*, and John Mearsheimer's *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. I argue that neither the Clash of Civilizations nor the End of History theses correctly captures the complexity of our contemporary social and political life, as they are both based on the assumption of the superiority of the West and the inferiority of the Rest.*

**Keywords:** clash of civilizations, end of history, tragedy of great power politics, dignity of difference, clash of ignorance.

*"History does not kill. Religion does not rape women; the purity of blood does not destroy buildings and institutions do not fail. Only individuals do those things."*<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

There are two other important books that must be mentioned in the context of this article, which are aimed at finding the correct answers to the new challenges of the post-Cold War era. Besides *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* by Samuel Huntington, Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* became extremely popular and still has a significant impact on public discourse regarding the newly established contemporary political order. The second one, John Mearsheimer's *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, is less well known to the public, but still very influential in academic circles. His

\* The opinions expressed herein are strictly personal and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Hungarian MFAT.

\*\* István Lakatos: career diplomat, former human rights ambassador of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) of Hungary, currently senior adviser at the Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro.

1 Giandomenico Picco, Personal Representative of the UN Secretary-General for the Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations (2001). See Vesselin Popovski, (2012). "Dignity of Difference" and Re-evaluation of Western Dominance' in Mojtaba Mahdavi & W. Andy Knight (eds.), *Towards 'the Dignity of Difference?' Neither 'End of History' nor 'Clash of Civilizations'*, Routledge, London, 2012, p. 89.

argument that in the post-Cold War era other great powers will seek to balance the power of the US, was quoted frequently by researchers.<sup>2</sup>

Following the Yugoslav wars, the dissolution of the USSR, 9/11, the rise of ISIL and the recent refugee/migration crises in Europe focused international attention on Huntington's paradigm. However, Huntington's book is mainly an answer to the work of his former student, Francis Fukuyama, predicting the complete victory of Western democracy and free-market capitalism, in addition, it also includes references to Mearsheimer's thesis. Therefore, this chapter gives a short critical overview of the theses established by the three well-known US scholars; furthermore, by introducing other approaches, it provides more accurate answers to the human rights challenges of this post-Cold War period.

## 2. The End of History and the Last Man

Fukuyama, in an article published in 1989,<sup>3</sup> and subsequently in a book (1992) entitled *The End of History and the Last Man*,<sup>4</sup> gave a very optimistic analysis of the post-Cold War Era. He claimed that with the demise of the Soviet Union, communism stopped being a challenge to the spread of Western-style liberal democracy, and consequently, democracy would be "the only game in town".<sup>5</sup> According to his paradigm, Western liberal democracy and the free market represent the "acme of human achievement"; after that there is nothing else to achieve anymore.<sup>6</sup> In his book Fukuyama was of the view that the collapse of the Soviet system marked "the end of history as such: that is the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."<sup>7</sup> Fukuyama, and other liberal thinkers, believed that modernization and development would result in Western-style secularism, and "tolerant, rational, pragmatic, progressive, humanistic" societies.<sup>8</sup> According to his vision, in the post-Cold War era Western institutions will gradually increase their influence and "cover the whole world to thereby foster peace and signal the end of historical development".<sup>9</sup> In conclusion,

- 2 Glen M. E. Duerr, 'Huntington vs. Mearsheimer vs. Fukuyama: Which Post-Cold War Thesis Is More Accurate?', in Davide Orsi (ed.), *The 'Clash of Civilizations' 25 Years On. A Multidisciplinary Appraisal*, E-International Relations Publishing, Bristol, 2018, p. 76.
- 3 Francis Fukuyama, 'The End of History?', *The National Interest*, No. 16, Summer 1989, pp. 3-18.
- 4 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Free Press, New York, 1992.
- 5 Jeffrey Haynes, 'From Huntington to Trump: Twenty-Five Years of the "Clash of Civilizations"', *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, Vol. 17, Issue 1, 2019, p. 14.
- 6 Chandra Muzaffar, 'The Clash of Civilizations or Camouflaging Dominance?', in Salim Rashid (ed.), *The Clash of Civilizations? Asian Responses*, The University Press Limited, Dhaka, 1997, p. 99.
- 7 Fukuyama 1992, p. 217.
- 8 Riley Quinn, *A Macat Analysis. Samuel P. Huntington's The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Routledge, London, 2017, pp. 38-39.
- 9 John M. Hobson, 'Deconstructing the Eurocentric Clash of Civilizations: De-Westernizing the West by Acknowledging the Dialogue of Civilizations', in Martin Hall & Patrick Taddeus Jackson (eds.), *Civilizational Identity. The Production and Reproduction of "Civilizations" in International Relations*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 153.

Fukuyama's concept was a Western-centric approach, based on the assumption that, by definition, the West was developed while the Rest was underdeveloped because of its traditional cultures and institutions; the latter to be abandoned by the Rest in order to adopt Western practices.<sup>10</sup> Fukuyama's thesis implies that there is a universal paradigm of development and democracy provided by the West and that both the West and the Rest are monolithic categories. He assumes that there is a "singular path to modernity" and the Rest has no other choice but to follow it. This paradigm implies that the cultures and traditions of non-Western states are not important factors in the whole process.<sup>11</sup>

*Fukuyama's paradigm has particularly strong explanatory force for describing the world during the 1990s*, when we witnessed the proliferation of democracies and saw more and more states were choosing free market principles. This trend completely changed because of 9/11. The paradigm was also challenged by the rise of China and the resurgence of Russia. However, despite the recent decline in the number of democracies in the world, in 2017, 87 of the 195 measured states were still considered "free".<sup>12</sup> This high number proves that democracy is still considered by many states as the best and final form of human government. Research also underlines that democracy is the best way to prevent interstate wars: democracies do not fight each other. Besides, in the post-Cold War period there is no one distinct ideology (such as the fascism or communism of the past) to compete with liberal democracy and capitalism.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. The Tragedy of Great Power Politics

In his 2001 book, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*,<sup>14</sup> Mearsheimer provides a neo-realist overview of the international system (offensive realism), arguing that the anarchic nature of the international system is responsible for the promotion of aggressive state behavior in international politics, and not necessarily the moral concerns, or the particular characteristics of a given leader. He is of the view that "conflict is a fact of the international system because ultimately the dynamics of great power politics lead to wars over dominance of the system".<sup>15</sup> Mearsheimer argued that states want as much power as they can get and are not interested in maintaining the balance of power.<sup>16</sup> As correctly assessed by Glen M.E. Duerr, Mearsheimer's thesis has not yet been tested for two reasons. (i) First, the US is still the principal actor in Europe from a security perspective and Mearsheimer's prediction of the return of great power rivalry in Europe will not happen in the context of such a large presence of US troops. (ii) The second, obvious reason is

10 Mojtava Mahdavi & W. Andy Knight, 'Introduction. Towards 'the Dignity of Difference'? Neither 'End of History' nor 'Clash of Civilizations', in Mahdavi & Knight (eds.) 2012, p. 2.

11 Id. pp. 4-5.

12 Duerr 2018, p. 79.

13 Id. pp. 77-81.

14 John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 2001.

15 Duerr 2018, pp. 76-77.

16 Mearsheimer 2001, p. 22.

that the US is still the sole superpower of the world and so far no other country can outweigh Washington.<sup>17</sup> However, the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the hostilities between Russia and Ukraine certainly contributed to a wider acceptance of Mearsheimer's thesis. These events could not be foreseen based on Huntington's paradigm, as they were intra-civilizational clashes.<sup>18</sup>

#### 4. The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order

Huntington, in his 1993 article in *Foreign Affairs*<sup>19</sup> and later in his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, predicted that in the post-Cold War period power would be redistributed on the basis of civilizations. Consequently, the major source of conflict would not be ideological or economic, but cultural. It is important to note that *Huntington did not intend this book as a work of social science but rather an interpretation of the evolution of global politics after the Cold War*.<sup>20</sup> Civilization in his understanding was the "highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity".<sup>21</sup> In his paradigm, it is culture and not the state that is the focal point of war.<sup>22</sup> He is of the view that there was no *lingua franca* among civilizations and that democracy and human rights were Western values, with no real meaning for the Rest.<sup>23</sup> Huntington claims that the "weakness and irrationality" of the Rest is one of the main obstacles to the global spread of Western values and institutions.<sup>24</sup> The term "clash of civilizations" appeared first in a book by Basil Matthews in 1926, entitled *Young Islam on Trek: A Study in the Clash of Civilizations*. However, Huntington borrowed it from Bernard Lewis, who used it in a 1990 paper, published in the *Atlantic Monthly* entitled *The roots of Muslim Rage*.<sup>25</sup>

In his article, Huntington specified eight civilizations (West, Latin America, Africa, Orthodox, Confucian, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist); he later added Japan to the list in his book and also changed Confucian to Sinic.<sup>26</sup> These civilizations, according to former Harvard professor Peter Katzenstein, are "coherent,

17 Duerr 2018, p. 80.

18 Id. p. 82.

19 Samul P. Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations?', *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993, pp. 22-49.

20 Haynes 2019, p. 12.

21 Erik Benson, 'Introduction to the Theme Issue: Old Wine in New Skins? Revisiting the "Clash of Civilizations" Thesis', *Christian Scholar's Review*, Vol. 48, Issue 3, 2019, p. 215.

22 Máté Tózsér, *A Clash of Civilizations or a Clash of Interests? An Analysis Based on the Book "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order" by Samuel P. Huntington*, VDM Verlag, Riga, 2008, p. 3.

23 Davide Orsi, 'The Clash of Civilizations and the Realism in International Political Thought', in Orsi (ed.) 2018, p. 11.

24 Mahdavi & Knight 2012, p. 3.

25 Karim H. Karim & Mahmoud Eid, 'Clash of Ignorance', *Global Media Journal – Canadian Edition*, Vol. 5, Issue 1, 2012, p. 18.

26 Samuel P. Huntington, *A civilizációk összecsapása és a világtrend átalakulása*, Európa Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 2014, pp. 57-61.

consensual, invariant, and equipped with a state-like capacity to act”.<sup>27</sup> Huntington predicted that from among the civilizations, Islam and Confucianism would pose a real threat to the West and would in the future clash with Western civilization.<sup>28</sup> In the 1980s, Huntington still thought that Japan would challenge the US economic supremacy. This prophecy became irrelevant in the 1990s when the Japanese economic boom stopped.<sup>29</sup> Huntington’s paradigm is very much Western-centric. According to his views, there are three issues which separated the West from other civilizations: (i) the ability to maintain its military superiority; (ii) the promotion of Western values, like human rights and democracy; and (iii) the restriction of the entry of non-Western immigrants and refugees into Western societies.<sup>30</sup> One of the most controversial statements Huntington made was that “Islam has bloody borders”. This harsh statement was seen as a prophecy by many in light of the rise of ISIL by neglecting the wider international context and in particular the very low level of inter-state violence in our contemporary world.<sup>31</sup>

## 5. The Main Elements of the Criticism of the Thesis of The Clash of Civilizations

Many academics criticizing the thesis of *The Clash of Civilizations* point out that *the presentation of the West or of Islam as monolithic entities is a serious misunderstanding of the dynamics of culture*.<sup>32</sup> It is well demonstrated by researchers that both the Western and the Muslim worlds are very much divided based on the shared values and beliefs of the people living there. It is only sufficient to mention the Sunni/Shia division or the heated debates within the EU on human rights issues.<sup>33</sup> Looking at the most important political clashes today, both Russia *versus* the West, and the Korean situation are intra-civilizational conflicts.<sup>34</sup>

Erik Ringmar called *The Clash of Civilizations* an offensive thesis, *i.e.* putting the world population into boxes, calling them civilizations, and stating that people in the same box are the same, but sufficiently different from people in other boxes to clash. He criticized Huntington for not addressing culture in a meaningful way and neglecting the importance of ideas and values in his

27 Peter Joachim Katzenstein, ‘A World of Plural and Pluralist Civilizations’, *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 77, 2013, pp. 15-16.

28 Abul Kalam, ‘Huntington and the World Order: Systemic Concern or Hegemonic Vision?’, in Rashid (ed.) 1997, p. 52.

29 Richard Falk, ‘Geopolitical Turmoil and Civilizational Pluralism’, in Fred Dallmayr *et al.* (eds.), *Civilizations and World Order, Geopolitics and Cultural Difference*, Lexington Books, Lanham, p. 9.

30 Haynes 2019, p. 15.

31 Duerr 2018, p. 84.

32 Karim & Eid 2012, p. 9.

33 Haynes 2019, pp. 17-18.

34 Anna Khakee, ‘Plus, Ca Change... Civilizations, Political Systems and Power Politics: A Critique of Huntington’s ‘Clash of Civilizations’’, in Orsi (ed.) 2018, pp. 88-89.

paradigm.<sup>35</sup> Ringmar disagrees with Huntington about the meaning of civilizations, which he thinks do not have a particular content but rather are a “mechanism or a social practice” and not a kind of “supra-culture” as they appear in Huntington’s paradigm.<sup>36</sup>

Martin Hall and Patrick Thaddeus Jackson highlight that contrary to Huntington’s definition of civilizations as a nation or a society, they are more like an ongoing process. They are never in splendid isolation from each other: inter-civilizational connections are more and more central.<sup>37</sup> Katzenstein also argues that civilizations are pluralistic, and they are generally “characterized by inter-civilizational encounters and trans-civilizational engagements and only rarely by civilizational clashes”.<sup>38</sup>

Chris Brown highlights that *civilizations cannot clash; only individuals or groups claiming to represent civilizations can clash*. Systems of ideas cannot clash but also civilizations are unable to authorize people to clash on their behalf.<sup>39</sup> Other academics argue that the overall tendency in our world is moving toward the “fusion” of civilizations, establishing a “common set of expectations” for the vast majority of people in our Planet.<sup>40</sup> Anna Khakee underlines that there are two sets of issues on which Western and non-Western states could clash. The first one could be related to economic competition, weapons proliferation, borders, so issues of power politics, while the second could be on human rights, democracy and institutions, which are related to political systems or regime types. The point is that none of them are civilizational issues *per se*.<sup>41</sup> While Vesselin Popovski admits that civilizations can clash, he claims that this is not because of identity differences, but because they are fighting for “space and power”.<sup>42</sup>

Wouter Werner correctly points out that international law is almost completely absent from Huntington’s thesis. This is interesting as “international law was born out of such a clash”, and for centuries the relationship between the so-called civilized and less civilized world was one of the core issues of international law.<sup>43</sup> International law provides certain criteria for giving full recognition and protection under international law as members of the international community, including civilized peoples. These criteria contain the basic institutions of government and public bureaucracy, organizational capacity for self-defense, published legal code, and adherence to the rule of law, the

35 Erik Ringmar, ‘Samuel Huntington and the American Way of War’, in Orsi (ed.) 2018, p. 26.

36 Id. p. 28.

37 Martin Hall & Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, ‘Introduction: Civilizations and International Relations Theory’, in Hall & Jackson (eds.) 2017, pp. 6-7.

38 Katzenstein 2013, p. 18.

39 Chris Brown, ‘International Society, Cultural Diversity, and the Clash (or Dialogue) of Civilizations’, in Dallmayr *et al.* (eds.) 2014, p. 56.

40 Benson 2019, p. 218.

41 Khakee 2018, p. 91.

42 Popovski 2012, p. 90.

43 Wouter Werner, ‘The ‘Clash of Civilizations’ in International Law’, in Orsi (ed.) 2018, p. 134.



capacity to honor contracts in commerce and capital exchange and lastly the recognition of international law and norms.<sup>44</sup>

Mojtaba Mahdavi and W. Andy Knight are of the view that we should speak more about the clash of fundamentalisms than of clash of civilizations to describe the current tensions in our world, where the clash is between two versions of political extremism: a market and a religious fundamentalism. This can be also called “the clash of ignorance”.<sup>45</sup> Benjamin R. Barber refers to this phenomenon as Jihad *versus* McWorld. He describes the clash between a “fundamentalist revolt against modernity” and “aggressive materialism”. However, he underlines that it was more a clash within a civilization than between civilizations.<sup>46</sup>

Máté Tózsér argues that in our contemporary world there is no such a thing as clash of civilizations, but what we are witnessing is the clash of interests of states, causing international conflicts. He considers 9/11 as an intra-civilizational provocation by Islamic fundamentalists within the Muslim world, to end the passivity of the rest of Muslim world. Tózsér supports the “superiority of interests over culture or religion, eventually civilization”.<sup>47</sup>

Shireen Hunter also confirms that the real cause of conflicts between the West and Islam is not their civilizational incompatibility, but the balance of power, giving the West greater influence over the fate of the Muslim World, by using different financial and military means.<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately, in this relationship, in the case of a conflictual situation, the ideological and value-oriented goals of the West are always subordinated to security, political, and economic interests. The best example is the lack of interest by the West in fair and open elections if there is a real danger that a pro-Western government would be replaced or weakened.<sup>49</sup> Hunter is also of the view that there are more tensions among Muslim states than between the West and the Islam world.<sup>50</sup> As an important conclusion, he underlines that “the slower pace of secularization in Muslim countries cannot be attributed to Islam’s specificity”.<sup>51</sup> The less secularized character of most Muslim societies is not because of the special quality of their faith, but due to the social and economic underdevelopment of the region.<sup>52</sup>

44 Brett Bowden & Leonard Seabrooke, ‘Global Standards of Market Civilization’, in Hall & Jackson (eds.) 2017, p. 123.

45 Mahdavi & Knight 2012, p. 12.

46 Benjamin R. Barber, ‘Neither ‘the Clash of Civilizations’ nor ‘the End of History’, in Mahdavi & Knight (eds.) 2012, p. 218.

47 Tózsér 2008, pp. 28-29.

48 Shireen T. Hunter, *Future of Islam and the West: Clash of Civilizations or Peaceful Coexistence?*, Praeger, Washington DC, 1998, pp. 19-20.

49 Id. p. 24.

50 Id. p. 28.

51 Id. p. 165.

52 Id. p. 166.

## 6. Possible Solutions to Overcome the Flaws of Huntington's Paradigm

Scott Waalkes rightly points out that *peace was beyond Huntington's concern when elaborating his paradigm*. Huntington devotes only a few pages in his book to outlining possible ways to decrease the tensions between civilizations. As noted by Miroslav Volf, this paradigm was “good for fighting, but not for living together in peace”.<sup>53</sup> The hermeneutical hospitality Waalkes is offering would mean that committed members of different civilizations would sit together and interpret their sacred texts searching for truth and mutual understanding.<sup>54</sup>

Chiara Bottici and Benoit Challand point out that the clash of civilizations became a successful political myth. Its aim was not to describe the truth but to create it.<sup>55</sup> It is important to note that it is not just a Western myth exported worldwide; it also has its Arab Middle Eastern version. They consider this clash more within, than between civilizations.<sup>56</sup> On the surface, 9/11 turned the idea of the clash of civilizations into a prophecy fulfilled, as the attack of a few extremist terrorists were wrongly considered an attack by Islam on Western civilization. This happened with the help of the other side as well, resulting in the radicalization of Islamic movements, which acted as if the clash between civilizations existed.<sup>57</sup> Bottici and Challand underline that there are no inferior or superior cultures; cultures “must be considered on an equal footing, and not according to what we think is particularly ‘civilized’”.<sup>58</sup> They highlight that the concept of culture (contrary to the concept of civilizations) went through a process, which liberated it from its original elitist and Eurocentric approach.

The response of the UN to the challenge posed by the clash of civilizations theory was to *designate 2001 a Year of Dialogue among Civilizations*, based on the proposal of Mohammed Khatami, then President of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This initiative was followed in 2005 by the launch of the UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC). These initiatives were complemented by the work of UNESCO and the OIC aimed at organizing actions and programs on the dialogue between civilizations.<sup>59</sup> As noted by Jeffrey Haynes, the role of religion was largely expended at the UN as a consequence of 9/11 and the new institution's name (UNAOC) was a clear response to Huntington's paradigm.<sup>60</sup> Later, in 2017, a Group of Friends was established to support the activities of UNAOC: it included 120 governments and 26 international organizations.<sup>61</sup>

53 Scott Waalkes, ‘Beyond the Clash of Civilizations: Hermeneutical Hospitality as a Model for Civilizational Dialogue’, *Christian Scholar's Review*, Vol. 48, Issue 3, 2019, p. 237.

54 Id. p. 246.

55 Chiara Bottici & Benoit Challand, *The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations*, Routledge, London, 2012, pp. 2. and 11.

56 Id. p. 50.

57 Id. p. 101.

58 Id. p. 117.

59 Gregoria Bettiza & Fabio Petito, ‘Why (Clash of) Civilizations Discourses Just Won't Go Away? Understanding the Civilizational Politics of Our Times’, in Orsi (ed.) 2018, p. 38.

60 Jeffrey Haynes, ‘Huntington's ‘Clash of Civilizations’ Today: Responses and Developments’, in Orsi (ed.) 2018, p. 56.

61 Id. p. 57.



As a response to the flaws of Huntington's thesis, *many scholars started to use the term "clash of ignorance" underlining "the value of taking into account the wider historical, intellectual, and religious relationships between societies"*.<sup>62</sup> This thesis challenges the assumption that civilizations are monolithic entities, which are not interacting with each other, and that they should clash with others. Karim H. Karim and Mahmoud Eid highlight in their article that although there are significant differences and clashes between the West and Islam, there is a remarkable overlap between the two civilizations and good examples in history of their "fruitful engagement".<sup>63</sup> Tózsér also underlines the importance of "putting emphasis on the similarities and not the differences of each civilization", in order to successfully fight terrorism.<sup>64</sup>

Mahdavi and Knight argue that neither the *Clash of Civilizations*, nor the *End of History* theses capture correctly the "complexity of our contemporary social and political life", as they are both based on the assumption of the superiority of the West and the inferiority of the Rest. They suggest a third way of dialogue and acceptance, the notion of the Dignity of Difference, to overcome the flaws of Fukuyama's universalist paradigm and Huntington's particularist approach.<sup>65</sup> The Dignity of Difference paradigm (which was originally presented by Professor Jonathan Sacks in 2002) is based on the notion that democracy, freedom, and human rights are not exclusively Western ideas; they are a part of all cultures.<sup>66</sup> The supporters of this approach are of the view that as the root causes of radicalism, extremism, and terrorism are diverse, policies to address them should be multiple as well. These policies should respect the Dignity of Difference and should be supportive of multicultural responses.<sup>67</sup> Popovski emphasizes that the most important and successful way to prevent inter-civilizational clashes is to address the economic and political factors of wars, as conflicts are not religious but political and economic in nature. It should be clearly seen that there is no West, there are many 'Wests' and there is no single Rest, or no single Africa or Islam.<sup>68</sup> Popovski underlines that the Dignity of Difference thesis is aimed at mobilizing "action against ignorance, intolerance and violence".<sup>69</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

The three concepts outlined in this article on the "end of history", the clash of civilizations" and "the tragedy of Great Power Politics" managed to describe certain periods or events during the post Cold-War Era. *Fukuyama's concept was useful in the 1990s*, when everyone thought that with the collapse of the Soviet

62 Karim & Eid 2012, p. 22.

63 Id. p. 7.

64 Tózsér 2008, p. 39.

65 Mahdavi & Knight 2012, p. 1.

66 Id. p. 13.

67 Id. p. 18.

68 Popovski 2012, pp. 83-84 and 95.

69 Id. p. 92.

System, the liberal form of democracy is going to dominate the new world order, without any serious competitors. *Huntington's paradigm became popular with the outbreak of the Yugoslavian War*, as proof that civilizational identity is the main driving force in international relations. Finally, as it was already mentioned, *the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the hostilities between Russia and Ukraine contributed to the better acceptance of Mearsheimer's thesis*.

However, *none of them was able to provide a comprehensive explanation* for the complexity of our contemporary international landscape. History certainly did not end after the collapse of communism, and as we can see in many countries that the so called "illiberal democracy" became the most popular catchphrase to describe the political philosophy of a given government. More and more researchers made it clear that civilizations cannot clash with each other, there can be confrontation only between people claiming to represent a certain civilization. Besides, civilizations are not monolithic entities, there are serious dividing lines within them. They are in permanent contact with each other and most of their "clashes" are due to different state interests and not to civilizational differences. An interesting survey about the variation in tolerance in 23 Muslim-majority and Western countries also demonstrated that it was more the Islamic political regimes that have a negative effect on social tolerance and not Islam itself.<sup>70</sup> Lastly, despite the significant economic strengthening of China and the more and more "self-confident" foreign policy of Russia, we cannot say at this moment that any of them would become a new sole superpower, replacing the US even in the medium term.

The answer to the question posed in the title of this article should be affirmative, although we can still witness that for many governments it is still more suitable to intensify alleged inter-civilizational clashes or differences in order to remain in power. The best way to overcome civilizational prejudice is education, aimed at combatting ignorance of other cultures. The 'unknown' has frequently been considered a danger in the history of mankind. The international community should finally adopt – at the level of the individual citizens and not only in statements by politicians – human rights and democracy as universal values, which have roots and a place in every culture, and recognize that there are no insurmountable cultural barriers preventing the peaceful cooperation between different peoples in our contemporary world. We have only one world, so our responsibility is exceptional.

70 Scott Milligan *et al.*, 'Assessing Variation in Tolerance in 23 Muslim-Majority and Western Countries', *Canadian Review of Sociology*, Vol. 51, Issue 3, 2014, p. 239.