

THE END OF THE COLD WAR AS AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CONFLICT OF CIVILIZATIONS

Hatidža Beriša, PhD¹

University of Defense, Belgrade, Serbia

Katarina Jonev Ćiraković, MSc

Aleksandar Ćiraković, MSc

Abstract: The clash of civilizations is a popular name for the theory that appeared after the end of the Cold War. This theory advocates that main source of conflict in the world will no longer be opposing ideologies, but belonging to different civilizations. The author of the theory is Samuel Huntington who claimed that differences between civilizations will lead to the future wars. According to him, the future wars will be between civilizations.

The aim of this paper is to understand the nature and causes of conflicts in the world after the Cold War, through the prism of the theory of conflicts of civilizations, with a presentation of relevant facts to what extent conflict is possible and real. The paper defines the basic concepts of civilization and social conflicts by pointing to globalization as a possible catalyst for conflict. The authors try to provide answers to the questions such as the following: How important is it to understand the relationship between religion and war? What is the prism of the theory of clash of civilizations? What are the facts that indicate the reality of the clash of civilizations after the Cold War?

Keywords: social conflict, globalization, civilization, Cold War, religion, war

INTRODUCTION

Conflict, in general, is an immanent category of human life and a historical fact. It is present in almost all life issues of people, such as: good and evil, justice and injustice, faith and unbelief, wealth and poverty, knowledge and ignorance, rural and urban, etc. In a word, it is an eternal theme of people, expressed through needs, values and interests. With the formation of society as an organized human

¹ berisa.hatidža@gmail.com



community, the conflict gained its institutionalized structures, functions and a special social dimension.

Social conflicts are, in their content, changeable, dynamic, multiple-caused and complex phenomena. Their deepest roots lie in the contradictions between the interests, values or significant material and spiritual resources that the parties to the conflict want to have at their disposal. Social conflicts can arise and develop gradually, but also spontaneously, which usually leads to their aggravation and escalation, while in the most extreme form they can result in the complete destruction of the existing social system.

During the Cold War, the world was bipolar, divided into two opposing military blocs: the North Atlantic Alliance and the Warsaw Pact countries. Bipolarity, it will be shown later, meant a balance of power and was the best guarantee of peace. For the first time in history, global politics is multipolar and multicivilizational. After the end of the Cold War, many theorists around the world believe that it now makes much more sense to classify countries not according to the economic level of development and ideology, but rather in terms of their culture and civilization. Therefore, some theorists predict that the conflicts of the future, as the last stage in the evolution of conflict, will be based on civilizational (cultural and religious) differences.

THEORY OF CONFLICT OF CIVILIZATIONS

According to Samuel Huntington's theory of the clash of civilizations, after the end of the Cold War, the main source of conflict in the world will no longer be opposing ideologies, but belonging to different civilizations.

It could already be seen that civilizations are dynamic. In addition to being lasting, civilizations evolve, rise and fall, merge and separate, disappear and are buried. Scientists generally agree in their identification of major civilizations in history and those that exist in the modern world. Yet their views often differ as regards the total number of civilizations that have existed in history. These differences depend in part on whether cultural groups, such as the Chinese or Hindus, have historically had one, two, or more close civilizations, one of which was the result of the other. Despite these differences, the identity of major civilizations is not under dispute.

According to Huntington, the modern world is divided into six civilizations to which Latin American and, possibly, African civilization can be added. The most important civilizations are: Sinic, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Western, Latin American, African (possible), but Huntington also shows Orthodox and Buddhist civilization on the map of the world in his book of civilizations after 1990 (Huntington, 2000: 48-51). According to Huntington, the main defining characteristic of civilizations is religion (Huntington, 2000: 48-51).

Huntington's division included the so-called "lonely" countries that stand out among their surroundings with various cultural and other specifics, e.g. Israel in the Middle East, Ethiopia in Africa, as well as the so-called "torn countries" whose parts belong to different civilizations, e.g. Ukraine.

Huntington believed that the most important and dangerous conflicts in this new world would not be conflicts between social classes, rich and poor or other economically determined groups, but between people belonging to different cultural entities: "In this new world, local politics is ethnic politics; global politics is the politics of civilizations." (Huntington, 2000: 48-51).



Although nation-states will remain major players in world affairs, violence between states and groups from different civilizations has the potential to escalate as other states and groups from these civilizations come together to support "related countries." As one of the examples, he cites the conflicts in Yugoslavia, in which Russia provided support to Serbs, and Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran and Libya to Bosniaks, not because of ideological, political or economic reasons, but because of cultural kinship. That is why he claimed that the affiliation to a civilization will be more and more important, and the world will be increasingly shaped by the interaction between civilizations.

Huntington's arguments as to why civilizations will clash, which he presented in *Foreign Affairs* in an article entitled "The Clash of Civilizations", could be summarized as follows:

- 1) Due to fundamental differences in history, language, culture, tradition, and (most significantly) religion. People from different civilizations have different views and these differences are much deeper than those based on ideology and political regime.
- 2) Accelerated and increased communication between different cultures has contributed to the intensification of internal civilizational consciousness as well as the awareness of differences in relation to others, which leads to the creation of hostilities.
- 3) Modernization and social change have contributed to the separation of people from old local identities and the nation state. This gap is filled by religious fundamentalist movements.
- 4) Non-Western societies (i.e. their elites) return to the values of their own civilization, rejecting the pro-Westernization that comes from their elites or the Western civilization. Today, more than ever, one can hear references to inward trends (e.g. "Asianization", "Hinduization", "Re-Islamization", etc.).
- 5) The growth of economic regionalism on the one hand strengthens the awareness of civilization; on the other hand, in some parts of the world it presents difficulties for countries like Japan, which is a single society and civilization.

Due to the mentioned differences, Huntington believes that the conflict is inevitable on two levels. At the micro level, neighboring groups living along demarcation lines between civilizations fight, often very brutally, to control a particular territory or each other. At the macro level, states belonging to different civilizations compete for relative military and economic power, fight for control over international institutions and third parties, and promote their personal, political or religious values in a competitive style. Huntington insisted that people of different civilizations have, in addition to different languages, histories, cultures, traditions, and most importantly religions, very conflicting views on the relationship between God and man, that these differences are the product of centuries of tradition and they cannot be overcome quickly and easily.

Wars over inadequate borders are almost always wars between people of different religions. History is full of local conflicts and wars due to the inadequate border, and among the more important conflicts, Huntington cites the conflict between Serbs and Croats in the former Yugoslavia and Buddhists and Hindus in Sri Lanka. According to him, these conflicts are not equally distributed among the world's civilizations. While at the macro or global level it is the primary conflict between the West and the rest, at the micro or local level it is the conflict between Islam and others. "Everywhere we look along the border of Islam, Muslims have trouble living peacefully with their neighbors." (Huntington, 2000: 284).

Analyzing several sources of data on involvement in intergroup violence, Huntington concludes that Muslims were engaged in two thirds to three quarters of intercivilizational wars against non-Muslims in the 1990s. That is why he did not hesitate to write the following: "The borders of Islam are bloody,



and the same is the case within its borders.” (Huntington, 2000: 286). This statement provoked several critical comments around the world, and among them was John Esposito, who sharply criticized this Huntington’s thesis in the book *Islamic Threats: Myth or Reality* (Esposito, 1994). Huntington also noted that “Western interference in the affairs of other civilizations is probably the most dangerous source of instability and potential global conflict in a multicivilized world.” (Huntington, 2000: 347). He therefore recommends that the West should refrain from interfering in a possible conflict between China and Japan, and that Islam should not interfere in conflicts in Europe, even in the name of the Muslim minorities living there. Unfortunately, the facts show that the involvement of Islam in the conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia was significant, and this is still the case today, as evidenced by the recent statement of Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan during his visit to Kosovo and Metohija.

Explaining why the conflict between Islam and the West is the most probable, he states that this conflict has been going on for 1300 years. Until the end of the Second World War, the conflicts took place in a wide area with limited intensity. After the period, the growing needs of the West for oil, the emergence of Arab nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism, this decades-long military interaction between the West and Islam will not weaken but may become more deadly. Given the demographic explosion in the Islamic world, the possibility of armed conflicts is becoming more and more probable. The history and depth of the conflict between the West and China is also indisputable, primarily because of China’s economic development, which allows it to expand its military capabilities and increase influence in the region and its ability to join and adapt to that development (Huntington, 2000: 241).

In the end, perhaps the best conclusion about the probability of a clash of civilizations was given by Huntington himself when he said: “Dangerous conflicts in the future will probably arise from the interaction of Western arrogance, Islamic intolerance and cynical confirmation.” (Huntington, 2000: 203).

GLOBALIZATION AS A POSSIBLE CATALYST OF CONFLICT

Globalization is a process of transformation of local or regional phenomena into global ones, and can be described as a process in which the peoples of the world, unified as a single society, function together, so that this process is a combination of economic, technological, sociocultural and political forces.

An increasing number of different actors, in the form of individuals, groups, non-governmental, multinational, transnational, supranational and global actors are appearing on the international scene, playing an increasingly important role in relation to sovereign states and complicating the international scene, sharing and distributing power and influencing its dispersion. “Relative predictability in international relations, which has lasted for over three centuries, conditioned the existence of the system of states as the main, long and only skeleton of world relations, and the process of branching out the global structure began several decades ago,” Dragan Simić points out (Simić, 2002: 15).

CORE AND PERIPHERY COUNTRIES

At the beginning of the 21st century, there are about 200 sovereign states in the world that are legally equal, although there are differences between them. During the Cold War, in a system of international relations based on sovereign states, there was competition between states that were in three different groups: core countries (western countries), communist countries, and third world countries. With the



disappearance of the communist countries after the Cold War, the ideological divisions also disappeared, so the world and the countries of the world were again divided into the countries of the core (center) and the countries of the periphery. Although they are actors in the international relations of the state, their position will determine the place they occupy in the two mentioned categories, the core countries which are smaller in number, yet economically and politically stronger, constitute creators, bearers, financiers and the main support to liberal values, principles and institutions, while peripheral states represent numerically larger portion that consists of weaker states "less committed to democracy, the free market and peace. The core is, therefore, the place from which the process of liberalism spreads to the periphery region," Mandelbaum points out (Mandelbaum, 2004: 68).

With the new process of globalization, the gap between rich and poor countries is deepening, inequalities are increasing and the distance between the West and other civilizations continues to grow. Globalization is thus presented as a form of postcolonial imperialism, which not only deepens the exploitation of the "periphery" by the "center" or the "South" by the "North", but also adds most of the post-communist countries of the Second World to the list of victims of globalization ("semi-periphery"), and in front of all those that remain permanently, "East of Eden" - outside the newly established steel curtain between the European Union and the Eurasian (south) east.

Polarization and differences between the global north and the global south are increasing, giving the problem of economic inequalities a political dimension. "The drastic increase in inequality in the last three decades is primarily due to the neoliberal economic system whose structure and functioning are conducive to high inequality rates," Džuverović said, noting that the rise in inequality may cause the conflict. The dominance of neoliberalism as an economic and political doctrine has led countries to a state in which they free themselves from their traditional role of regulating economic relations and redistributing economic goods, leaving them to market relations. Therefore, it is necessary for states to act preventively on the issue of reducing social inequalities (Džuverović, 2013: 194-195).

The anti-imperialist, anti-colonial and anti-hegemonic mood of the globally awakened mass population of the most underdeveloped part of the world shows its new relative limitations in the emerging global world system. The first constraint is the end of cheap Western military interventions against weak opponents originating from the underdeveloped part of the world. Another limitation is the supremacy of national influence and balanced foreign policy expressed through elements of soft power in relation to the application of elements of hard power in achieving the goals of the subjects of international relations, primarily military forces and military-political alliances. The supremacy of the West on the global level is over, but the "dependence of the West on America, on its internal vitality and on the historical relevance of its foreign policy" is crucial (Bžezinski, 2002: 137).

RELIGION AND SOCIAL CONFLICTS

In the last few decades, and especially in the first two decades of the 21st century, as opposed to the once dominant theory of secularization, approaches and theories that challenge the decline of religiosity and the social importance of religion have become increasingly common. When we talk about absolute and relative numbers, the parallel between the number of religious people in the world since 1970 with the one from 2010 is indicative, which confirms the thesis that the number of religious people is growing. Data on religiosity in absolute terms show that the number of believers in all world religions has increased: Christians from 1.236 to 2.135 billion, Muslims from 554 million to 1.314 billion, Buddhists from 233 to 379 million, Hindus from 463 to 870 million and Judaists from 14 to 15



million. By 2030, the population that practices the principles of the youngest monotheism is expected to grow to 2.2 billion. In terms of relative numbers, in the period from 1970 to 2005, the number of members of these religions grew from 67.8% to 72.4% of the world's population.

It is difficult to answer whether religion, as it has returned to the stage of modern social essences, is the same religion from a few centuries ago. Nevertheless, what can be concluded on the basis of the analysis of the expansion of the new religiosity and its relation to secular authorities is that religion is incorporated into secular life to a significant extent. Whether this happened because religion slowly adapted to secular society, or perhaps secular society proved so incapable of solving the newly accumulated problems of late postmodernism that religion "found itself in trouble" is matter for further discussion. It is obvious that the crisis of modernity has reintroduced religion in society in grand style, although it would not be wrong to conclude that religion itself began to feel stronger, more present and more effective by adapting to secular society and its demands.

RELIGION AS A CATALYST FOR CONFLICT

Religions are essential components of culture and civilization but they are also the causes or at least the factors of numerous conflicts. Religion has changed over time and adapted to new secular circumstances, so today its role in conflicts is focused on supporting ethnic groups, nations and states in their aspirations, mostly ethno-nationalist, but its conflict potential is still not negligible (Subotić, 2017: 233).

Conflicts like the one between Jews and Muslims in the Middle East, clashes between Catholic Christians and Muslims in East Timor, Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, Muslims and Hindus in Kashmir, conflicts between Hindus and Sikhs in India, Taliban tyranny against all others in Afghanistan, the conflict between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria (further complicated in recent years by the presence of the militant Muslim sect Boko Haram) and the like, do have elements of religious conflict. In the public discourse of the post-Yugoslav space, attitudes could be heard that the civil war in the former SFRY, primarily in Bosnia and Herzegovina, was in fact a religious conflict (Subotić, 2018: 79). Of course, religion should by no means be seen as the primary cause of hatred, misunderstanding and various types of conflicts. In these situations, it is seen as an occasion, i.e. as a justification for different preferences of different societies. For example, wars have been fought primarily for economic reasons, i.e. the conquest of natural resources, or even the expansion of territory. In these cases, religion was primarily used as a means of motivating people to participate in the conflict.

THE REALITY OF THE CONFLICT OF CIVILIZATIONS

Huntington's theory of the clash of civilizations has been discussed among sociologists, political scientists, anthropologists, psychologists and other experts. Some justify it, some criticize it. Some people were impressed, some intrigued, some hurt, some terrified, and some confused. Many believe that the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001 marked the beginning of the clash of civilizations that Huntington predicted. Many believe that the conflicts occurring at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century also confirm Huntington's predictions. The "Arab Spring", the conflicts in the Middle East, the events in Ukraine, which Huntington described as a "divided" country, additionally support this theory.



The data show that, since the end of the Cold War, the main global conflicts have not been ideological or economic in nature, but rather conflicts between civilizations. Huntington states that, at the beginning of 1993, slightly less than half of the 48 ethnic conflicts in the world were between groups of different civilizations. So, the notion of the total domination of the West, the “end of history” as some have triumphantly announced, after the end of the Cold War, is completely wrong. The data indicate that Western civilization is in decline, and that economic power is rapidly shifting to East Asia, followed by military power and political influence.

The fact that the world is being modernized does not mean that it is turning to the West. Many examples around the world show that modernization does not necessarily mean Westernization. Modernization does not require any ideology or group of institutions: elections, national borders, civic associations or other signs of Western life. Non-Western societies can achieve modernization without abandoning their own cultures and adopting Western values, institutions, and practices en masse. For example, Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, India, China and many others have become modern societies, without Westernization. Modernization without Westernization is certainly one of the possible sources of conflict between the West and non-Western civilizations.

The resurrection of Islam and ‘re-Islamization’ are now central themes in Muslim societies (e.g. Turkey, Iran, Indo-Asia). The prevailing tendency in India is the rejection of Western forms and values and the ‘Hinduization’ of politics and society. In East Asia, governments promote Confucianism and political and intellectual leaders talk about the ‘Asianization’ of their countries. In the mid-1980s, Japan became obsessed with the “theory of Japan and the Japanese”. This global process of “returning to one’s own roots” is manifested in the revival of religion in many parts of the world and, most conspicuously, in the cultural resurrection in Asia and Islamic countries achieved by their economic and demographic dynamism. Religious resurrection around the world represents a reaction against secularism, moral relativism and debauchery, and a reaffirmation of the values of order, discipline, labor, mutual aid, and human solidarity. The newly established religious movements are mostly anti-secular, anti-universal and anti-Western, which speaks in favor of the thesis that the conflict of civilizations is a reality, not a myth.

The economic development of East Asia is one of the most significant developments in the world in the second half of the 20th century. The process that began in Japan in the 1950s extended first to Hong Kong (now under Chinese sovereignty), Taiwan (which China considers its own territory), South Korea, Singapore, then China, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, India, and Vietnam. This East Asian economic development significantly changes the balance of power between Asia and the West, especially the United States, which allows them to react less and less to the demands and interests of the United States and to be more and more able to resist pressure from the United States or other Western countries.

While the rise of East Asia has been fueled by spectacular economic growth rates, the rise of Islam has been fueled by the spectacular growth of the population, the so-called ‘demographic explosion’ in Muslim countries. Namely, the expansion of the population in Islamic countries is significantly higher than in neighboring countries and the world in general, with an annual growth rate above 2.0%². This growth rate in the number of Muslims has led to a sharp rise in youth in the more important Muslim countries who are the protagonists of protest, instability, reform and revolution. In addition to the high growth rate and rapid spread of literacy in these countries, it created a gap between the younger generation and the predominantly illiterate older generation, which led to tensions in the political sys-

2 Predictions say that by 2025, the percentage of the Muslim population will reach 30% of the world’s population.



tems of these countries and, ultimately, to the “Arab Spring” in 2011. The complex processes that led to, as Huntington says, the intercivilizational conflict in the former Yugoslavia, had many causes and sources, but one of the most important factors was the demographic change that took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina³ and, especially, in Kosovo and Metohija⁴.

CONCLUSION

With the end of the Cold War, the process of globalization reaches its peak and increases economic and social challenges, risks and threats, especially for underdeveloped countries, and the consequence may be the outbreak of civil wars, ethnic, religious and other conflicts. Inequality and poverty, as a result of the economic imbalance that is clearly visible in the process of globalization, are a powerful factor in generating ethnic conflicts, and poor countries are a rich source of and fertile ground for such conflicts.

Religion has changed over time and adapted to new secular circumstances, so today its role in conflicts is focused on supporting the aspirations of ethnic groups, nations and states in their aspirations, mostly ethno-nationalist, but its conflict potential is still not negligible. Religions are essential components of culture and civilization but also the causes or at least the factors of numerous conflicts.

The clash of civilizations will dominate world politics and will at the same time be the last stage in the evolution of conflict in the modern world. Conflicts will arise along inadequate borders of civilizations because cultural differences are not only real, but also basic.

If we look at what changes after the end of the Cold War and why the clash of civilizations is possible, there are enough arguments. What creates the biggest problem for us now is the pandemic. If we look at it and what it has brought from a civilizational point of view, it may be noted that the relevance of the Western civilization is declining (in this case is a real example of the United States) and that economic power will be transferred to East Asia, that is, to China. This means that the influences on instruments will be able to change very quickly. On the other hand, modernization without Westernization is a source of conflict between the West and non-Western civilizations (every day we witness a more open conflict between the United States and China). Religious resurrection around the world will continue to be a reaction against secularism, moral relativism and debauchery, and a reaffirmation of the values of order, discipline, labor, mutual aid, and human solidarity. The newly established religious movements are mostly anti-secular, anti-universal and anti-Western, an obvious example being the increasingly prevalent theses of sharia, caliphate and religious laws.

Will the structure of the population on the globe change in the foreseeable future? Events and reality warn us that population is aging in countries where the non-Muslim world lives, and there is a demographic explosion in countries where Muslims live. The growth rate of the Muslim population has led to a sharp rise in youth in the more important Muslim countries, with younger generations who are increasingly literate and unemployed and, as such, have become protagonists of protest, instability, reform, and revolution. There are more and more different groups on the scene that want to change civilization, especially the Western one, whether the American withdrawal from Afghanistan

3 In 1961, Serbs made up 43% and Muslims 26% of the population of BiH. By 1991, the relationship was almost exactly reversed: Serbs fell to 31% and Muslims accounted for 44%.

4 The population of Kosovo and Metohija in 1961 consisted of 67% Albanians and 27% Serbs. By 2000, Albanians made up 88% and Serbs only 7% of the population of Kosovo and Metohija.



will mean that everything Western needs to be destroyed, and whether that will be a reason to open new hotspots. It does not matter whether we call them hybrid threats or terrorist attack, it is obvious that the humanity will suffer.

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