Battle for hegemony in the contemporary world: Civilizational Dispute in Historiography[1]

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Abstract: *The issue of cultures or civilizations interacting has always obsessed historians and political analysts alike as most scholars believe it can help better understand international relations. The rise of global terrorism on the lines of religious fundamentalism has only served to strengthen the belief in the idea of a clash of civilizations. Yet as the historiographical analysis proposed here shall strive to demonstrate, defining such interactions is somewhat more difficult as it is necessary we take into consideration other elements as well, such as economic interests, commerce, and of course local and regional social developments. The paper will look at some of the most influential works written on the subject in an attempt to compare several theories regarding the rise of the West, a possible resurgence of the East/Rest, how this has influenced civilizational interactions, and to propose new possible interpretations.*

Key words: *civilization, competition, historiography, inventions, hegemony, West vs. East*

Introduction:

On 9/11 the United States of America were the target of an unprecedented terrorist attack which brought back to the forefront of academic debate Samuel Huntington's theory of "the clash of civilizations". It is tempting to believe that the conflict between the West and the Rest is one based solely on religious differences[2], civilizational characteristics are far more complex. Huntington's definition of civilization is incomplete, and the tensions he analyses are not based just on religion, they have several underlining causes, such as: economics,

[2] Culture, religion and in some cases even language.

politics, or culture (other characteristics, which are not encompassed by religion).

Looking over the research of scholars such as Niall Ferguson, Ian Morris, Anthony Pagden, Paul Kennedy, Kenneth Pomeranz, Bernard Lewis, Jonathan Fox, David Landes, Jeremy Black or Joseph S. Nye Jr., this study aims at proving that the interactions between civilizations are not clashes, but rather a highly complex form of competition. Throughout history, at one point, two or more civilizations have been competing for world supremacy, and on more than one occasion this has led to military confrontation. This was not merely a battle of religions or identities[3], but an economical one as well, a struggle for resources, which indeed can lead to a clash of cultures. Who manages to impose themselves as the dominant force will also influence what we call culture, and this is where Huntington's clashes might occur. Traditionalists and conservatives will either have a skeptical attitude toward, or even oppose foreign influences, which can lead to some form or degree of violence. Still, this does not always generate ample enough conflicts so as to call them civilizational clashes.

A new angle for understanding civilizational interaction is essential and represents the main motivation behind the paper. Such an analysis requires more complex research, but here we shall try to demonstrate that between civilizations there always exists a competition for power, and not a clash, as Huntington had theorized. In order to achieve this, several questions must be answered. First of all, what do clash and competition mean? Answering this is very important, because it influences how we see the problem. A clash involves a more violent interaction, while a competition does not necessarily lead to violence. Secondly, what we must look at is the number of civilizations, and which parts of the globe they encompass. Huntington divided the world using religion, while other authors have relied on economic factors or archaeology and came up with formulations such as the "West and the East" or the "West and the Rest". This topic is a highly complex one, and requires care. Thirdly, is the proposed competition's nature economic, political or religious? All these three elements are linked in a chain of mutuality. They do not exclude each other; on the contrary they involve

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[3] National identity is a relatively new concept, a creation of the Modern World, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition, (London & New York: Verso, 2006), *passim.*

one another, with a certain level of relevance. In our present time, economics and politics seem to have taken a front seat, while religion (at least in some parts of the world) has taken a backseat.

From an epistemological point of view, it is difficult to establish the exact tools which need to be used. This is because the nature of referred historiography offers explanations coming from a variety of fields of humanities. This makes it more of an interdisciplinary analysis, encompassing varying components. Etymology and cultural studies will be used to explain how we perceive the concept of *civilization*, but also the differences of meaning and intensity between *clash* and *competition*. Sociology brings elements linked with or to a society's ability to renew itself and how this comes into play in a race towards *development* and *hegemony*. Finally, economic history illustrates one of the most important aspects, the manner in which access and use of resources (human and material) influence the relationship between civilizations and their rotation as holders of *world hegemony*. Because of the proposed subject this paper will have a strong comparative approach, both in terms of referred historiography, and the geopolitical explanations it seeks.

Historiography:

Huntington brought a new way of thinking about civilizations, although he was not the first one to do so. Long before the publishing of his article, famed scholar, Edward Said wrote a ground breaking book, entitled *Orientalism*, in which he tried to explain how the term itself had come to be characterized by a series of false assumptions in Western thought relating to the Middle East.[4] This represented one of the first criticisms of Westcentrism. Although his aim had not been the creation of a comparative field of study, his work generated a debate with Bernard Lewis, thus opening the discussion on civilizations. Following in these footsteps, other scholars furthered such research, turning it into a field of its own, being part history and part theory of international relations. Even before this, Arnold Toynbee, in his *A Study of History*[5] put an emphasis on the study of civilization, not only as a concept but also its essence as a real-life structure. The potential and interest had always been there.

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[4] Eduard W. Said, *Orientalism*, Third Edition, (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p.1.
[5] Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, (London: Oxford Unversity Press & Thames and Hudson, 1972).

Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*[6] most certainly served to influence and develop Huntington's own later view on civilizational interaction. Kennedy attempted to explain how, throughout history, certain states have ascended to power, then dominated their respective civilizations and sometimes even the world, and then fall from grace. Unfortunately, as good as his research was, the mostly Eurocentric view left many questions unanswered. Jeremy Black argues that Kennedy was eluded by the particularity of each case, as not all imperial ascensions and declines have been the same.[7] Despite these flaws, it did offer scholars a new cyclical manner of thinking about world domination and the dynamics of international relations.

The historical context in which Huntington wrote his article and book is relevant. Only two years earlier, Francis Fukuyama had decreed that the end of the Cold War and the fall of communism and its Soviet bastion marked liberal-capitalism's victory ending the ideological battle, beginning a new age of peace[8]. It was not long that this dream was shattered, when the dissolution of Yugoslavia ended in a series of bloody ethnic wars. Not only did history not end, but it would be just as violent as before.[9] Huntington was determined to come up with a new answer, which took on the form of *The Clash of Civilizations*.[10] In his view, history had not come to an end; it would no longer be characterized by a battle of ideologies, but by a literal battle between the main religious groups of the world.

Even though Huntington was not a pioneer of civilizational studies, he did generate a new trend in historical and political studies. Those interested in the study of civilizations increased and soon enough the subject's historiography grew. Authors such as Bernard Lewis have tried to explain how Western Civilization has come to proeminence, by

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[6] Paul Kennedy, *Ascensiunea şi Decăderea Marilor Puteri. Transformări Economice şi Conflicte Militare din 1500 până în 2000*, (Iaşi: Polirom, 2011), *passim*.

[7] Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony: The world order since 1500*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2008), p.ix.

[8] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and The Last Man*, (New York: The Free Press, 1992), *passim*.

[9] Steven Pinker's thesis is that since the end of the Second World War violence has steadily decreased, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*, (Viking Books, 2011).

[10] Samuel P. Huntington, *Ciocnirea Civilizaţiilor şi Refacerea Ordinii Mondiale*, (Bucharest: Editura Litera, 2010), *passim*.

looking at the failure of Islam to maintain its supremacy. In *What Went Wrong?* Lewis argues that the Muslim World had failed to modernize itself, and thus got left behind.[11] A similar theory was brought up recently by Niall Ferguson. Unlike his predecessors, the tone is not as condescending, rather he considers that the West's domination is part of the cyclical pattern suggested by Paul Kennedy, only at a larger scale.[12] In fact, his mentor David Landes had developed a very similar approach in his *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*.[13] Ian Morris, in *Why the West Rules*, takes this position a step forward and paints a picture of this alternation throughout mankind's history, from the Palaeolithic to the present day.[14]

Jeremy Black, in *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony*, comes with an interesting critique of all previous historiography. He goes on to argue that although these authors made competent statements, they had been somewhat subjective. Their arguments were mainly focused on naval capabilities, ignoring land power. He also criticizes their tendency toward an over-emphasis of the virtues of liberal economics and trade, thus marginalizing the importance of culture.[15] In this sense, one could argue he bares similarities with Alexander Wendt[16]. In respects to his take on power, to some degree, he resembles Joseph S. Nye Jr.'s belief that power is not always materialistic, it does not necessarily manifest military, it can be cultural, thus similar to the concept of soft power.[17] Culture might also involve religion, thus putting a different spin on the analysis, serving to legitimize at least some of Huntington's thesis.

In short, despite the fact that Huntington's theory has a fair amount of deficiencies, his ideas have led to a popularization of Civilizational studies which do not emphasise Western superiority, but rather focus on the dynamics of inter-civilizational interactions. In this

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[11] Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle East Response*, (New Yok: Oxford University Press, 2002), *passim*.

[12] Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: The Six Killer Apps of Western Power*, (London: Penguin Books, 2012), *passim*.

[13] David S. Landes, *Avuția și Sărăcia Națiunilor. De ce unele țări sunt atât de bogate, iar altele atât de sărace*, Trad. Lucia Dos, (Iași: Polirom, 2013).

[14] Ian Morris, *Why the West Rules for Now: The Patterns of History and what they reveal about the Future*, (London: Profile Books, 2010), *passim*.

[15] Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony*, pp.3, 15, 63, 65.

[16] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[17] Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony*, passim.

respect, *The Clash of Civilization* has opened the road towards a better understanding of those who are different from us. But in order for it to become more efficient, Huntington's idea must be further explored so that its limits can be expanded.

1. Clash or competition?:

Samuel Huntington argued that with the end of the ideological conflict, the civilizational one would come to dominate the world scene. We cannot argue that there are no tensions between the different parts of the Earth, but what can be questioned is if they could be characterized as clashes or as a competition of sorts. The aim of this part is to try and figure which is the case.

The distinction between these two concepts can be made by looking at their level of intensity. The Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture states that a clash is an example of opposition or disagreement, in essence, a form of conflict.[18] But there is no need to interpret the definition since other sources describe it directly, as being "a conflict between opposing or irreconcilable ideas"[19]. It even goes as far as naming it "an encounter between hostile forces; a battle or skirmish"[20]. This implies that the tensions between civilizations are more than simple differences, and are in fact a cause of violence. When Huntington elaborated his thesis he was thinking more in the line of religious wars. This is obvious from the examples he brings in support of his arguments, one of them being the ethnic wars of Yugoslavia[21]. Indeed, one cannot deny that in the past religion has been a source of conflict, such as the crusades, and it is impossible for historians to predict the future.

In a world on the fast-track towards globalization, does religion still play such an important role in international relations and politics? It would be unwise to exclude religion as a major actor, but its place has degraded in the last century, in the face of capitalist and communist secularism. Authors, such as Fox and Sandler, argue that religion is still important, but that its role in conflicts is nothing more than an influence

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[18] ***, *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*, Sixth Edition, (Edinburgh: Longman, 2003), p.229.

[19] http://www.thefreedictionary.com/clash, accessed on 06.05.2013.

[20] Ibidem.

[21] Samuel Huntington, *Ciocnirea Civilizațiilor*, cap. 10 şi 11.

and does not constitute the driving force behind it.[22] This encourages a focus on the economic and military aspects. The idea of a clash between civilizations does not seem likely. An economic conflict would lead to protectionist policies or even embargos. So far there have been no actions or decisions which would indicate this to be the case. A military confrontation between two civilizations or even two major global players would be no less than a catastrophe for our current societies. Thus it is doubtful we can talk about a literal clash of civilizations. In this context the idea of a competition between civilizations seems more plausible. Of course terrorism driven by religious motivations, especially recent actions of ISIS/ISIL against Western Europe can constitute a serious argument for religion as a factor. Yet there is a question of magnitude, terrorists still lack the necessary resources and instruments to inflict the damage they wish.[23] In a recently published Foreign Affairs article, Kenan Malik brings a whole new interpretation for the actions of terrorists in Europe. Starting from a MI5 report he argues that the perpetrators of recent attacks are driven not so much by religious fervour, in fact these being non-practicing, highly educated individuals, but by a sense of generational rebellion. Thus he ties recent unrest of young Muslims to a phenomenon very much similar to the one that engulfed Europe during the 1960s.[24] Also there is the issue of representativeness, as Islamic fundamentalists do not define the beliefs of all Muslims, thus making them only a fraction of a civilization.

Joseph S. Nye Jr.'s take on international relations is also relevant as his concept of soft power changes the way we look at these interactions. A country can achieve its objectives in world politics when others admire its values, follow its example or aspire to achieve its level of prosperity and openness.[25] Thus it is not necessary that the battle for hegemony lead to military confrontation. Domination can be established through other means, such as culture or the economy, thus making it more of a competition than a clash.

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[22] Jonathan Fox, Shmuel Sandler, *Bringing Religion Into International Relation*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.133.

[23] Adam Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, (London, New York: Routledge, 2010), p.46.

[24] Kenan Malik, "Europe's Dangerous Multiculturalism", in *Foreign Affairs*, December 8th, 2015, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/western-europe/2015-12-08/europes - dangerous-multiculturalism, accessed on 8th January 2016.

[25] Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Puterea Blândă: Calea către succes în politica mondială*, Trad. Daniela Oana Ioana, (Iaşi: Institutul European, 2009), p.21.

The Longman Dictionary defines a competition as "the act of competing or the struggle between several people or groups to win something or gain an advantage".[26] The key word here is *advantage*. The objective is not to destroy or convert your adversary, but to dominate him, to put him in a less favourable position, which can lead to a state of conflict, and this is where Max Weber comes into play. He indeed perceived competition as form of conflict. Before it can be stated that this threatens the proposed thesis, we must understand that the German sociologist saw it more in the lines of a "peaceful conflict, consisting of attempts to gain control over scarce resources".[27] This means that it does not necessarily imply the use of violence, even though at times it can lead to it. Also, the fact that he emphasizes the importance of resources means that economics must be taken into account. But Joseph S. Nye Jr.'s argues that we must take into account the fact that while some resources might be useful in some scenarios, in others they might not. Also, converting them into real power and gaining the wanted results requires the proper strategies.[28] Thus there are more levels to the entire issue.

In this respect, I believe that the use of the term *clash* might not be the most fortunate. While there are tensions between the various civilizations of the world, this does not imply the necessity of a violent conflict. It seems more likely that they take on the form of a competition for hegemony. It should be seen as a struggle for power, economic and military supremacy.

2. The many civilizations of the world:

How many civilizations are there on Earth? Huntington came up with eight, while other authors chose to divide the world in less or more. This is linked to the type of analysis they elaborated. For example, Niall Ferguson and Ian Morris have opted for a West and East/ Rest opposition. Paul Kennedy focuses on the rise and fall of great powers, with an emphasis on Europe, even though he does not entirely ignore other parts of the globe, such as Japan or China. Jeremy Black criticizes this approach, characterizing it as a result of a navalist approach which ignores Chinese land power.[29] There are as many perspectives as there

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[26] ***, *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture,* p. 259.
[27] Ed. Nicholas Abercombie, Stephen Hill, Bryan S. Turner, *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology*, (London: Penguin Books, 2006), p.74.
[28] Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Viitorul Puterii*, Trad. Ramona Lupu, (Iaşi: Politom, 2012), p.24.
[29] Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony*, pp.3-4.

are authors. No one single scholar has opted for another's point of view, instead choosing to create his own.

First of all, we must define the concept of *civilization*. One way of conceiving it is as a form of organization which stands "between barbarism and a false "decadent" civilization engendered by a superabundance of money"[30]. This is an approach which admires the purity of a society untouched by science or the commercial nature of the West (the innocent barbarian). For the thinkers of Enlightenment this notion was linked to the idea of social progress, the triumph of rationality over religion.[31] Brett Bowden goes further and argues that "... variations on the idea of progress predate the appearance of the word and ideal of civilization by many centuries", it precedes the foundations of the Enlightenment.[32] He believes that "in essence, the idea of progress holds that human experience, both individual and collective, is cumulative and future-directed, with the specific objective being the ongoing improvement of the individual, the society in which the individual lives, and the world in which the society must survive".[33] Fernand Braudel comes and explains the 18th century definition: „civilization meant broadly the opposite of barbarism"[34].

One important addition brought to the concept of *civilization* belongs to Norbert Elias who saw a society which had reached „an advanced stage or condition of organized social life and social development, often used in distinction to primitive societies"[35]. This creates a double meaning of the term. „It denotes both moral and material values". Thus there is a temptation to divide them by attributing the spiritual side to *culture* and the material on to *civilization*. But Braudel thinks that this is not a viable solution, because there is no consensus in such a direction, giving it more of a speculative nature.[36]

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[30] Ed. Bryan S. Turner, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 72.

[31] Ed. Nicholas Abercombie, Stephen Hill, Bryan S. Turner, *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology*, p. 55.

[32] Brett Bowden, *The Empire of Civilization: The Evolution of an Imperial Idea*, (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p.47-48.

[33] Ibidem., p.50.

[34] Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*, Trans. Richard Mayne, Allen Lane, (New York: The Penguin Press, 1994), p. 4.

[35] Ed. Bryan S. Turner, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, p. 71.

[36] Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*, pp. 5-6.

Brett Bowden came up with a rather fascinating way of analyzing the concept. When trying to define civilization one should look closely at the term's evolution in three particular languages, French, English and German, as these nations are the main producers of intellectual culture. Firstly, the origins of *civilization* are French, and in the beginning it meant "the transformation of a criminal matter into a civil one". What Bowden points out is that it was linked to an ongoing process toward progress. He also makes one important distinction, it is not "...used to describe the collective life of just any group [...] it is reserved for collectives that demonstrate a degree of urbanization and organization".[37] We can clearly see that the term began to be associated to a certain set of values or a certain way of life.

Secondly, it entered the English vocabulary a few years later, in 1772, and it was increasingly associated with sociopolitical and legal organization. It is here that European type institutions of governance are considered the "...hallmark of the makings of or potential for civilization" for the first time. Obviously this was mostly an Eurocentric view of the world, as there were different structures or institutions capable of guaranteeing governance.[38] To some degree this will be used as a foundation for the legitimizing of late imperialism, Europeans as a civilizing force.

Thirdly, the German case was somewhat distinct from the other two, as there is a debate between the concepts of *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*. Bowden argues that the second term is of "second rank", as it is specific to external appearances. While the first one "... is representative of Germany's self-understanding of national pride, and sense of achievement- its sense of being". It refers to values or intellectual, artistic and religious feats. This approach is very different from the English and French variants.[39]

When Huntington came up with his idea, this view specific to the 18th and 19th centuries did not appeal to him. Instead he chose to focus on the 20th century conception of plural signifies.[40] He believed that culture was the way in which a people lived their lives, and civilization was still culture, but in a broader sense. He considers

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[37] Brett Bowden, *The Empire of Civilization*, pp.26-30.
[38] Ibidem, pp.31-33.
[39] Ibid., p.34.
[40] Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*, p.7.

elements such as the shape of the skull or skin colour as being irrelevant.[41] In this manner he distances himself from the dangers of Social Darwinism and eugenics, thus taking the debate away from racial theories.

One suitable interpretation would be in the lines of „any type of culture, society, etc., of a specific place, time, or group: Greek civilization"[42]. In this respect, we should view civilization not only as a state of development or evolution, but also as a society linked by certain identity aspects, a broader form of community[43] formed through a process of progress. Niall Ferguson, argues that civilizations can exist even if they lack the means of recording or preserving thoughts.[44] Thus the principles of defining such a unit are more flexible than those thought by the scholars of the 18th century. This allows us to make associations with greater ease, but simultaneously the lack of rigour can leave to much room for interpretation.

Huntington brought into discussion one other important aspect, he argued that civilizations have no clear borders, no clear beginning or ending.[45] Still, Braudel insists that they can be located on the map and that „an essential part of their character depends on the constraints or advantages of their geographical situation".[46] This is relevant in the sense that natural conditions (terrain and climate) influence the development of certain parts of the world (ex.: the impact on agriculture, which is directly linked to the size of the population). Yi Lin theorizes that these are very important aspects, as they determine how unified a civilization will be, a poor one will have the tendency to be closer while a rich one will develop multiple centers.[47]

The evolution of technology has played a key role in tipping the balance in favour of one or another. The extensive use of organic based

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[41] Samuel Huntington, *Ciocnirea Civilizațiilor*, p.51-52.

[42] http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/civilization, accessed on 08.05.2013.

[43] A community is a group of people which share a common language, history or religion. These three elements construct the imaginary borders of a community, which are its pillars. In a sense, a community is an invented concept, created through institutions, education and tradition.

[44] Niall Ferguson, *Civilization*, p. xxvii.

[45] Samuel Huntington, *Ciocnirea Civilizațiilor*, p.54.

[46] Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*, p.9.

[47] Yi Lin, *The life form of civilizations*, www.emeraldinsight.com/0368-492X.htm, accessed on 12.02.2014.

fuels (oil, coal and natural gas), has turned the Arabian Peninsula into a real gold-mine, for the people living there. In this respect, Braudel's theory holds to scrutiny, and at the same time it shows, that his perspective was one focused mainly on economic aspects. In light of this, a civilization can be perceived as being a society encompassing a number of identity elements, which has developed in accordance to its natural medium.

Establishing how many civilizations exist is undoubtebly a challenge for any scholar. This is because of the necessity to consider a great number of defining characteristics such as: geography, history, language or religion. While this might be achievable, one must also take into consideration aspects relating to the economy or the military. These could be integrated in the historical type analysis of Paul Kennedy. The problem with this interpretation is that it focuses strictly on countries, while Huntington's theory requires a much broader approach. Thus, Niall Ferguson's style offers a higher degree of epistemological satisfaction. He talks about economic and military aspects, but not with an emphasis strictly on core countries, but on their civilizations thus allowing an analysis of their rise and decline.

The eight civilizations envisaged by Samuel Huntington are highly complex ones, and despite much criticism they can be used in research. The first one is the Sino-Chinese, characterized by Confucianism, but not as its only element; it does not encompass just China, but also parts of South-East Asia. Secondly, comes the Japanese, which although some consider it part of the Sino-Chinese civilization, Huntington sees it as a distinct one (certain elements, like the Japanese language are of Chinese origin). The Hindi is concentrated in India, where it co-exists with a large Muslim community. The Islamic civilization is composed by a number of cultures: Persian, Arabic, Turkish and Malaysian. This makes it one of the most complex ones. The West has three components: Europe, North America and Latin-America, which leads us to another conundrum. Although Latin-America's origins are in Europe, it has evolved in a distinct fashion, remaining persistently Catholic, while Europe had the Reformation[48]. The

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[48] "... the Reform changed the rules. It encouraged education, it generated divergence and heresies, promoting scepticism, and the refusal of authority which stands at the centre of scientific research. Catholic countries instead of rising up to the challenge reacted by disapproving and becoming more closed." in David S. Landes, *Avuția și Sărăcia Națiunilor*, p.164

Orthodox world has its centre in Russia, with a Byzantine tradition. The last civilization is African, characterized by tribalism which generates multiple identities,[49] making it unlikely to achieve any form of political unity or homogeneity.

Although in the construction of his view, Huntington mostly took into consideration aspects relating to religion, one cannot completely disregard his work. In fact, with slight adjustments, we can operate with this division. This is because other authors have focused their works not on an analysis of all eight civilizations, but only on the West, trying to explain how it has imposed itself as the dominant and most influential economic, military and cultural force on the planet. Thus the other civilizations are portrayed as a monolithic Rest, which can lead to the omission of certain aspects. Also Jeremy Black argues that we should not confound great-powers and civilizations, these are distinct structures or concepts.[50] While the first can dominate the countries in their sphere of influence and they can also come into conflict with other states from different civilizations, it is unlikely they could use their civilization to generate global hegemony.

Early on we mentioned geography. This can cause problems when attempting to draw the borders of civilizations. Not all historians agree with the lines as seen by Huntington. For example, Ian Morris has a position, which can be characterized as unusual. He divides the world into three. For him, there exists the West, the East and Africa.[51] The problem is where he draws this line. If the West, for Niall Ferguson, David Landes, and Samuel Huntington meant, most of Europe and North America, for Morris, it encompasses the Middle East as well. This manner of seeing things can be linked to Eric Hobsbawm's theory that the superior technological advancement of the West widened the gap between them and the rest of the world. Thus he ends up stating that the globe was divided in two, the advanced, who dominated, and those less developed, who were dominated.[52] Of course such a position goes against the very essence of civilizational studies.

This subject was born from the scientific or pseudo-scientific comparison between the West, the Middle East and the Far East. We

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[49] Samuel Huntington, *Ciocnirea Civilizațiilor*, pp. 56-59.

[50] Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony*, p.197.

[51] Ian Morris, *Why the West Rules for Now*, p.96-98.

[52] Eric Hobsbawm, *Era Imperiului, 1875-1914*, Trad. Florin Sicoie, (Bucharest: Editura Cartier, 2002), pp.25-27.

now perceive these as being three distinct civilizations. But this is the view of the world that historians of the contemporary period have, Morris being an archaeologist, has a different perspective. He focuses on the similarities between Europe and the Middle East.[53] Indeed both Christianity and Islam are Abramitic religions, which mean there are strong connections between them. Also, throughout history, Ancient, Medieval, Modern or Contemporary, these two have been in close contact, be it violent or peaceful. In this respect, the struggle between the West and the Muslim world is very old and has become a common theme. This is not to say that they are antagonistic by nature. The occasional clash has been the result of the fact that they are neighbours and that for most of their existence they have been in competition for the same resources and territories. Also, as a tribute to a Huntingtonian style of thinking, both have a monotheistic faith, based on one Holy Book, and have a prophetic figure as the creator of their religion, and most importantly, they both have a proselitic attitude towards others, thus bringing them into competition. So to some degree, Ian Morris had good reasons to mould these two into the same grand civilization, since their fates seem to be related.

Matthew Melko believes that all civilizations which are growing have internal conflicts, and that these can "... spill over to neighbouring civilizations, or draw states from those civilizations into the conflicts". This turns proximity into a very important aspect of the entire issue. There is nothing mystical about this, any eventual hostility would resemble that between two different countries.[54]

So far, the focus has been on the conception of Western thinkers, very few having taken into account what those from a different medium believe. For Abdullah Al-Ahsan, there are neither three, nor eight civilizations; he advance that there are no fewer than twenty eight.[55] Unfortunately he does not elaborate further on this aspect, but he does offer a different approach on the entire problem of civilizational interaction, with a focus on Islam. Al-Ahsan argues that by the dawn of the twentieth century, this part of the world was no longer seen as a

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[53] Ian Morris, *Why the West Rules for Now*, Introduction, subchapter: Location, Location, Location.

[54] Matthew Melko, "Hostility Between Civilizations, Reconsidered", in *The Midwest Quaterly*, (Autumn 2006), 48, 1, p.51.

[55] Abdullah Al-Ahsan, "The Clash of Civilizations Thesis and Muslims: The Search for an Alternative Paradigm", in *Islamic Studies*, 48:2 (2009), p.193.

major player on the international scene. This was about to partly change because of the Energy Crisis and the Yum Kippur War, and the adoption of European systems by Muslim countries (Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and Egypt).[56] Al-Ahsan's greatest contribution is his critique of the historiography. He argues that most Western authors have ulterior reasons behind their works. In one instance he accuses Bernard Lewis of identifying himself with America because he is Jewish. Despite this he makes a clear distinction between Europe and the United States, on the basis that they do not have the same origins. Going back to Lewis, he criticizes him for basing his definition of Islam strictly on religion and a conservative tradition.[57] Even though Al-Ahsan brings solid arguments for his assertions, the harsh critique of Bernard Lewis does not hold out entirely. In the introduction of his 2002 book, *What Went Wrong?*, the British historian says that "at the peak of Islam power, there was only one civilization that was comparable in the level, quality, and variety of achievement; that was of course China"[58]. Thus one can hardly affirm that Lewis had xenophobic attitudes towards Muslim culture, in fact he seems to praise the greatness it once possessed. Also he does not consider the fall of Islam and the rise of the West as a result of a religiously fuelled conservatism, but as the result of ignoring the problems at the periphery of their empire (ex.: the defeat in the Second Siege of Vienna, or Western success in exploration).[59]

Al-Ahsan's critique is not focused solely on Bernard Lewis, he also tackles Huntington's theory. For him the *Clash of Civilizations* is an attempt to portray the rise of Islam as a threat to the West.[60] Certain aspects of this assertion can be linked to the American close relation to religion, thus making it partly true. This attitude can be seen as the result of stereotypes promoted in recent times in the United States and Europe. Al-Ahsan tries to explain that "the Qur'an does not single out Christians as the enemies of Muslims", and that in fact there are several similarities between these two religions, an aspect also mentioned in the above

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[56] Ibidem, pp.194-195.

[57] Ibidem, pp.196-198.

[58] Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle East Response*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.6.

[59] Ibidem, p.15.

[60] Abdullah Al-Ahsan, "The Clash of Civilizations Thesis and Muslims: The Search for an Alternative Paradigm", p.200.

paragraphs.[61] It can also be seen as another critique brought to Lewis, who had hinted at a possible rivalry between Islam and Christendom, linked by him through the religious similarities, which in essence were and are the cause of tension.[62]

Despite his opposition to Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, Al-Ahsan, does have certain common points with them. All three talk of resentment as an aspect of Christian-Islamic relations. But while, Huntington sees it as more of a cultural based one, he considers it to be "no different from that of those Asians and Africans who experienced European colonization, Muslims or otherwise"[63]. In this respect he is part of the post-colonial school. Despite his attempt at distancing himself from Lewis and Huntington's ideas, he ends up being part of the same school of thought.

Taking into consideration the previous argument Huntington's civilizations could be applied to research, of course with the adding necessary nuances. Despite the wide gaps and the exceptions it ignores, his view is narrow, yet still wide enough so as not to be too vague or exclusivist. He does not commit the sin of *Westcentrism*,[64] as he does not try to present the topic as the story of the rise of the West. This does not mean that Ferguson's or Morris' divisions are invalid. The problem is that theirs do not take into account certain civilizational differences, when talking about the Rest. One of the critics of this approach is Kenneth Pomeranz, who argues that European models of scientific advancement in early modern Europe were not a guarantee of the West's future rise to world power.[65]

3. The nature of civilizational competition:

Operating under the assumption that civilizational competition is a workable concept, it is essential to see which aspect plays a more important role, economics, military or religion (as a smaller part of culture), if the competition is to have a distinct character. Obviously

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[61] Ibidem, p.202-203.

[62] Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong?*, p.3.

[63] Abdullah Al-Ahsan, "The Clash of Civilizations Thesis and Muslims: The Search for an Alternative Paradigm", p.204.

[64] Focusing one's study of civilizations on the rise of the West, and ignoring the achievements of other parts of the World.

[65] Kenneth Pomeranz, *Marea Divergenţă: China, Europa şi naşterea economiei mondiale moderne*, (Iaşi: Polirom, 2012), p.21.

opinions vary from one author to the next, with there being three main currents of thought on the matter. On the one side we have Niall Ferguson, Kenneth Pomeranz and Paul Kennedy, who emphasize economic and military aspects[66]. And then there is Jeremy Black who considers that the role played by culture is a much more important one. Others, such as Samuel Huntington or Jonathan Fox, and to some degree Anthony Pagden, believe that religion still plays an important role in the workings of the international system.[67] The truth is that all these three elements are interlinked, they do not act as independent factors, one influences the other. This relation is most visible when analysing economics and the military. No country can have an impressive army without the capability of backing it up with a stable and growing economy.[68] In order to dominate the world, military power is essential, if you are the strongest it is easier to impose your culture and religion[69].

In this one aspect, Huntington had a good understanding of how global politics work. But he was not the first one to suggest this, merely a couple of years before him, Paul Kennedy brought it into discussion, while he was writing about the rise and fall of great powers. He focuses on several key nations and their dominance of the world scene. Thus we arrive at one of Huntington's key concepts, that of a central power for each civilization. As he stated himself this can be problematic because these are very hard to identify, exemplifying with the Muslim world, which at the moment is lacking of such a nucleus to lead its competitive efforts against the West and the Far East.[70]

At some level the issue of the central power could be seen as a form of band-wagoning, all the countries of one civilization follow the rhythm dictated by the strongest. Stephen M. Walt has theorized that "when confronted by a significant external threat, states may either balance or bandwagon". These two are specific to smaller and weaker countries, which must choose one or the other so as to ensure their survival. The issue of balancing has two sides. Firstly, you form alliances with those who individually cannot exercise hegemony, and secondly, there is a certain kind of equilibrium when it comes to influence.

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[66] They mostly argue that these two are not mutually exclusive, and that in fact they are closely linked to the rise and fall of civilizations.

[67] Their interpretations are slightly different.

[68] Paul Kennedy, *Ascensiunea şi Decăderea Marilor Puteri*, p.16.

[69] Samuel Huntington, *Ciocnirea Civilizaţiilor*, p.126.

[70] Ibidem, Capitolul 7, Subchapter: Civilizaţii şi ordine.

Bandwagoning relies on the capacity of intimidation possessed by a possible great power.[71] The issue here is that it is not sufficient to generate influence so as to affirm hegemony. As Jeremy Black argues, recent small-scale conflicts have brought to light the question of leadership. Great powers have proven incapable or restricted to lead. It is difficult to generate or influence the mobilization of those who are weaker.[72] One could see this as marking the limits of soft power, as there is a failure to obtain the wanted results by influencing the others' behaviour without the use of force. Joseph S. Nye Jr. who came up with this manner of understanding hegemony, admits that it is difficult to put into practice. Credibility and reputation are very important in our times, as information travels quickly, and it also goes through a cultural filter.[73] This would be true if the world would have been a simpler place, but it is not so. As David Landes argues, it is not always that the central power acts as a model for the rest of its civilization. For instance, 19th century Japan emulated its model for modernisation on Germany and Great Britain (the second holds the most similarities- it is also a small island with little to no resources).[74] Thus, resources are not an enough prerequisite for the development of a central power, a proper strategy is essential.

As we have already seen, it is difficult to establish which are the world's civilizations, because it is nearly impossible to define their limits. The perfect example is Asia, where there are no less than four civilizations competing for supremacy: India as the representative of Hinduism, Japan with its own characteristics, born from a form of modernisation reached in a state of relative isolation, China as the former and present great power with a historical legitimacy, and various countries with a Muslim majority. In such a diverse medium, no one single state can impose itself as a leader. It is highly doubtful that Japan will ever accept Chinese supremacy or the other way around. Thus the possibility of a united or coagulated Asian civilization is doubtful at best.

According to Niall Ferguson, in Europe, diversity led to technological and economical advancement, which in turn helped it gain supremacy. The constant bickering and wars that ravaged the continent eventually led to technological progress. Because of the relative

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[71] Stephen M. Walt, *Alliances: Balancing and Bandwagoning*, http://www.ou.edu/ uschina/texts/WaltAlliances.pdf, accessed on 15.04.2013, pp.110-111.
[72] Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony*, p.9.
[73] Joseph S. Nye, *Puterea Blândă*, pp.18, 128, 135-136.
[74] David S. Landes, *Avuția și Sărăcia Națiunilor*, p.318

equilibrium between the small kingdoms, free cities and medium-sized empires, created an atmosphere favourable to competition and innovation, as the only means of getting the upper-hand.[75] Jeremy Black argues, that the essence here is compromise. This was possible in Europe because "territorial states were also combinations of landed power and urban elites". These inevitably led to complex relationships which generated a need for negotiation, improving overall communication.[76] Thus changes occurred not only at a higher level, but also at a lower one. Interestingly, enough this is sort of a unique case in history. Ancient and Medieval China was almost under constant attack from various migratory peoples, from the Huns to the Mongols. Still, this did not lead to progress, but rather to a form of isolation. More than one author (Paul Kennedy, Niall Ferguson, Kenneth Pomeranz, etc.) see this as the "big mistake" in the competition for supremacy. But again, Jeremy Black contradicts this point of view by stating that we should not ignore China's expansionist tendencies, which despite all these adversities, helped it maintain its ambitions and force.[77]

The fact is that China had been so far in front of Europe in exploration, had they chosen a different path, America might have become their colony and source of raw materials and goods. Paul Kennedy manages to empathise with the Chinese position and decision that led to that situation. His attitude is not one of criticism, but rather one of trying to offer scientific answers for the sudden change in Chinese policy. It seems that the decision to stop any exploratory activities did have some justification. The nomadic peoples menace was big threatening the very existence of China, thus prompting a change of focus on survival.[78] But this is not the only explanation available. Landes argues that the Chinese did not aim for a technological domination of their enemies because of their numerical superiority.[79] Thus, diversity can generate progress, while in other places it can lead to a policy of isolation.

Political or national rivalry is not enough, resources are one prerequisite, one cannot advance without having access to more resources than his adversaries. This situation is nothing short of a vicious circle. In this respect the politics of isolation promoted by a series

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[75] Ferguson, *Civilization*, pp. 11-13.

[76] Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony*, p.71

[77] Ibidem, p.36.

[78] Paul Kennedy, *Ascensiunea şi Decăderea Marilor Puteri*, pp.29-30.

[79] David S. Landes, *Avuția şi Sărăcia Națiunilor*, pp.291-292

of emperors represented the turning point in the history of civilizational competition. The discovery of the American continent by the Europeans in the 15th century solved the issue, this new, vast and unexplored land would become their economic motor for what remained of the second millennium.[80] This allowed the smaller states to develop their technology and by using it impose their supremacy over the rest of the globe. Black does not deny that exploration brought new relationships for the West, but that it has been over-estimated when applied to the Early Modern Period. The positive fiscal and economic impacts where more specific to the 19th century expansion[81], in the context of colonialism and a new perception of empire, which created a better connected world through commerce and trade.[82]

One theory which challenges this argument is brought by Niall Ferguson who asserts that the "Chinese civilization had consistently sought to master the world through technological innovation".[83] Still one can say that the need for isolation, mentioned above, determined an abandonment of this philosophy in favour of a more conservative outlook, which in turn led to the loss of the former advantage. David Landes believed there is some explanation in Confucianism's unhidden contempt for scientific research.[84] Thus Europe did not gain its position strictly due to the discovery of America, but also because of Chinese isolationism, which left it unchallenged in exploration. There is little doubt that if things would have stood otherwise, Chinese technological advancement would have impeded most of Europe's attempts at expansion, and it would have never gained America. In fact, an impressive part of Pomeranz's theory was based on a very similar assumption.[85]

In regard to *resources*, it is not sufficient to have them, this is not a guarantee of power. Black links this mobilization to the willingness of supporting certain goals. He also sees a connection between this and compromise, as such actions require governmental cooperation.[86] While it seems plausible, and might be true to some extent, it over-plays the

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[80] Kenneth Pomeranz, *Marea Divergență*, p.17.

[81] Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony*, p.45.

[82] Eric Hobsbawm, *Era Imperiului, 1875-1914*, p.25.

[83] Niall Ferguson, *Civilization*, p.27.

[84] David S. Landes, *Avuția şi Sărăcia Națiunilor*, p.294

[85] Kenneth Pomeranz, *Marea Divergență, passim.*

[86] Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony*, p.11.

role of objectives. A certain power might hope to achieve its goals, it might lack the necessary resources from the start. Nazi Germany aimed at conquering European Russia, but it certainly did not have enough supplies to do so. But this might not be the case. The conversion of resources into power in the sense of obtaining the wanted results supposes the need of elaborate strategies. These represent the link between means and goals, and they should include both hard and soft power.[87] Thus it is possible to attribute Germany's failure on the Eastern Front to bad management.

4. Exchanges of a commercial and technological nature:

Another important aspect which indicates towards a competition rather than a clash, not only in present times, but also in the centuries before, is the role of commerce within civilizations, and also between them. It comes in relation to the previous argument, because just like any other goods, inventions themselves also travel along the trade routes. As Jared Diamond put it in his famous *Germs, Guns and Steel*, "technology develops cumulatively rather than through heroic acts, and it finds most of its uses only after it has been invented rather than being invented for a certain purpose".[88] Landes offers the Portuguese example, for them each expedition was based on the previous, each time endeavouring further.[89] In essence a means of communication is highly important when it comes to development, no society or civilization can evolve without it being in contact with others. In this respect, one can assert that Niall Ferguson's theory is incomplete; Europe's domination was not the sole product of internal competition, but also of international communication. Also, if one stretches this idea a little bit further, it would not be so hard as to see where this could and can turn into an economic issue. Commerce facilitates not only the exchange of goods, but most importantly one of ideas. This again is linked to one of Jared Diamond's arguments. "From where do innovations really come? For all

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[87] Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Viitorul Puterii*, pp.24-26.

[88] Jared Diamond, *Viruşi, arme şi oţel: soarta societăţilor umane*, (Bucharest: Alfa, 2010), p. 240.

[89] David S. Landes, *Avuţia şi Sărăcia Naţiunilor*, p.89, Landes also explores the importance of inventions difussing to various European countries during the Industrial Revolution, David S. Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus. Technological change and industrial development in Western Europe from 1750 to the present*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

societies, with the exception of those few which have been isolated, in most part or a majority of new technologies are not invented locally, but are borrowed from other societies."[90] Thus, one can point to the importance of the economic factor as a cause of commerce, which in turn is the cause of progress, through the spreading of certain life-improving apps. On the other hand, Jeremy Black has a very different approach, he emphasizes that every piece of technology, every such development, has a cultural dimension. While a certain piece of hardware proves useful in one society, it can be of little or no use at all, where there is a lack of tradition in using and developing it.[91] This changes the way in which we see the spread of technology, as it downplays the importance of commerce, but without denying it.

Most authors, Niall Ferguson, Paul Kennedy, David Landes, Kenneth Pomeranz, consider commerce to be fundamental in the West's dominance of the rest of the world. This trend of thinking, as mentioned before, can be associated to navalism, a tendency to overemphasize the importance of naval power. Jeremy Black argues that this was, and tends to still be a standard view in Europe and North America. He sees this as an exaggeration of reality. He comes with the example of Germany, which managed to dominate the continent despite a lack of oceanic trade. But Black admits to the fact that it had been "a crucial source of liquidity", obtained without any governmental intervention. Naval capabilities should not be perceived "... as the product of power, but rather as one of its determinants".[92]

Going back to technological diffusion, Jared Diamond emphasises on the fundamental role played by proximity. "The relative importance of local inventions, of those borrowed, depend in general on two factors: the ease with which one invents a certain technology and the proximity of that society to other societies."[93] This can be perceived in two ways. Firstly by going back to Samuel Huntington it would be easy to see how certain civilizations might interact better than others. It was his firm belief that it would be easier for those civilization which have common elements to be able to cooperate, than with those completely different.[94] Thus Catholics and Orthodox might find grounds on which to

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[90] Jared Diamond, *Viruşi, arme şi oţel*, p.249.

[91] Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony*, p.22.

[92] Ibidem, pp.5, 28, 63.

[93] Jared Diamond, *Viruşi, arme şi oţel*, p.249.

[94] Samuel Huntington, *Ciocnirea Civilizaţiilor*, p.186

collaborate. He is not wrong, at least to some degree. Cultural similarities between the various confessions of the Christian world can bring them closer, helping them work together on common projects. But at the same time, one cannot deny the mercantile character of the present. It is highly doubtful that if there would be an economic gain, a Christian civilization would not cooperate with an Islam based one, and the best example for this is the American-Saudi Arabian relationship, which can be characterized, despite the differences, as a good one. Secondly, Diamond's theory is somewhat vague, he does not explain his perception of proximity, if it is a matter of geography or of culture, although, the first one seems to play a more important role, in his mind.[95] In this respect, we can see commerce as an efficient means of technological exchange, which can be intentional or unintentional.

The last word mentioned in the above paragraph can be seen as a niche through which Huntington's theory can still come into play. Diamond did admit to the fact that the diffusion of ideas could come as a result of espionage or war.[96] These two imply a state of conflict or a clash of civilizations. Thus within Huntington's theory the circulation of ideas and technology is not hindered by tension. Still one must take into consideration the character of this transfer. The nature of the relations will inevitably influence the type of inventions borrowed. A war will most likely support the development of new weapons, but not only, as the need for resources might trigger innovation in other areas of life[97]. In this respect, war is not only a cause of destruction and misery, but can also play the role of trigger for development, at the cost of other aspects. The fluctuation of war is determined by that of the economy, which in turn is tributary to the circulation of ideas and technology, which can make it achieve a higher level of production or cause it to become unbalanced[98].

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[95] Jared Diamond, *Viruşi, arme şi oţel*, p.251.

[96] Ibidem, p.250.

[97] Fuel, food and raw material are always at the centre of the development of a society, during peace and war time. Still a conflictual state might trigger a higher need for a certain resource. Thus focus might, and will shift towards it, making the respective society more open to innovation in that area. This would determine a more evolved sense of paying attention to certain types of ideas and inventions, which favours acceptance of "New".

[98] As mentioned before, one need might surpass the other, and this might lead to certain area being left outside the loop, with dire consequences for the economy and the population.

5. The curse of economic constraints:

In the pages above we have discussed the relation between the economy and the military. It is more than obvious that these two influence one another with dire consequences. Paul Kennedy argued that "historical evidence suggests that in the long run there exists a very clear connection between economic ascension and decline of a great power, on one side, and the rise and decline of its military might on the other hand".[99] The best example for this is the First World War. With all its advanced technology and discipline, the Central Powers, never really stood a chance at defeating the economic colossus of the Entente. On the one side, the German Empire had developed its industrial capabilities, but it lacked the colonial resources (manpower and raw material) necessary to become more than a continental power. The Austro-Hungarian Empire had grown weak in the century before the war, while also rotting from the inside as its multiple peoples developed their own national identity. On the other hand, despite the obvious structural weaknesses of the Russian system, the Tsars still possessed an impressive amount of resources, enough to inflict damage and divert troops on the Eastern Front, making a decisive German offensive in the West impossible or suicidal. At the same time, the British and French empires controlled almost half of the globe's territories, which came with the obvious advantages.[100] It is a known fact that attrition wars are won only through economic resilience and supremacy.

Focusing on the issue of economics, there was one fundamental difference between Europe and the rest of the world. The smaller states of Europe, lacking in other means of real income, proved themselves to be, more efficient at gathering tax revenues in comparison to Asian states, public debt being an unknown concept to the Chinese.[101] This theory fits in perfectly with the idea that "need" generates the necessary tools to solve it. Although Jared Diamond disputed this by arguing that most inventions were the result of curiosity rather than of a certain requirement, and that the "need" appeared only after people began using the tool.[102] The fact is that it is quite difficult to prove or disprove this assertion, and that probably both versions are valid, some

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[99] Paul Kennedy, *Ascensiunea şi Decăderea Marilor Puteri*, p.21.
[100] Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, (London: Penguin Books, 1999), *passim.*
[101] Niall Ferguson, *Civilization*, p.38.
[102] Jared Diamond, *Viruşi, arme şi oţel*, pp.237-238.

inventions are the result of curiosity while others are the result of need. This is based on the fact that Diamond had a tendency towards generalisation, which can sometimes blur the lines of a highly complex issue.

6. Mixing religion and politics:

Religion comes into play when we try to explain why and how the West got its advantage over the Ottoman Empire, which for a long period had been its main contender in the battle for hegemony. Niall Ferguson believed that in Europe the Reformation changed the way science was viewed and used, meaning laicization. Simultaneously, the Muslim world remained tributary to religious teachings, which might have inhibited certain forms of progress.[103] This universalism, generated an acceptance which in turn increased and improved the access to human resources, which has proven throughout history to be most important in the race towards technological development. But this was not the sole reason, Paul Kennedy brings into question the political aspect, which seems to play an equally important role, the decline was caused by the defects of centralization, despotism and severe conservatorism towards initiative, dissidence[104] and most importantly commerce.[105] Ferguson also takes this approach in his analysis, focusing an entire sub-chapter on explaining how the Ottoman Empire failed in its attempt at modernisation, because of the same reasons mentioned above.[106] Thus one can conclude that the Rise of the West was not solely the result of its own inventiveness or solely because of its liberal faith and ideology, nor solely because of its thirst and need for exploration, but rather a combination of these, corroborated with the East's failure to renew its own systems so as to pose a challenge.

        As we have seen, the nature of civilizational competition is not a single-faceted one. All three, economics, military, and religion determine the nature of the relationships between civilizations. These factors do not act individually, as they do not exist as such. Thus they are the result of an interlinked chain-system of causality

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[103] Niall Ferguson, *op. cit.*, pp.60-62, p. 67-69.

[104] Seen here as a form of opposition, which generates new ideas, and forces the regime to renew itself in order to adapt to new conditions, and thus survive.

[105] Paul Kennedy, *Ascensiunea şi Decăderea Marilor Puteri*, p.33.

[106] Niall Ferguson, *Civilization*, Chapter 2 Science, Sub-Chapter Tanzimat Tours.

Conclusions:

Offering an absolute answer to the proposed questions is difficult, if not impossible that there is no one true solution. As the dynamics of the international system change so do the explanations and the mechanisms which put it into motion. This article represents an attempt at doing this, of course to the extent that such a paper can hope to. It is not a matter of bibliography, but rather one of interpretation. In this respect the number of theories is equal to the number of authors.

Firstly, most dictionaries and encyclopedias make a clear distinction between a clash and a competition, with an emphasis on intensity. Thus a clash involves the use of violence and implies the existence of a conflict, while a competition seems to be more like a race for resources, technology or control. The conflictual state of competition is downsized by Max Weber's explanation that in this case it has more of a peaceful character, there being no intention of subjugation of those which are weaker.

Secondly, defining the concept of civilization can at times be somewhat subjective, depending on the author's personal views and perception of global politics. As we have seen, establishing the mere limits of a civilization poses a challenge, since it is difficult to decide if they are geographical or symbolic (as is the case of those specific to communities). The answer probably lies somewhere between these two, as geography has the tendency of limiting certain groups of peoples' expansion. At the same time, this forces them to further their knowledge and technology so as to overcome their limitation, the best example being Europe, which although not very rich in resources managed to build colonial empires, dominating and controlling the globe.

Finally, the character of this competition comes down to a series of interlinked factors or even facts about the world. Without a doubt, religion had and still has a role to play in the way international relations work, but its part has reduced considerably, in the past two hundred years. Other issues, such as, the economy and the military have come to dominate, as the world itself has gotten a more mercantile and militaristic character. This does not exclude religion; rather it makes it part of a chain of interlinked aspects of which none can exist without the other. If a society has the strongest economy, it can support the most numerous and well-equipped army, which in turn gives it hegemony over others, and allows it, or at least creates a favourable environment so

as to impose its culture (religion being one part of it). The change itself is the result of a race for supremacy, forcing nations and civilizations to further their advancement by coming up with new technology so as to surpass their challengers. As we have seen this could be the result not only of internal innovation, but it could also come from the destruction of war, as it determined certain mutations within the system itself, if you can to adapt, you survive, if not, you become someone's puppet.

In the end, it is more than obvious that this paper was not meant to discredit the theories before it, but to attempt and bring them together, taking the best from each and thus offering an explanation of the world's mechanisms. This should be seen as the introductory part of a larger thought project, which if finished could bring a new interpretation of international relations, without fully discrediting Huntington, Ferguson, Morris, Kennedy or any other, but filling the gaps left by them. In this respect, the reader should view this not as a fully grown theory, rather as the beginning of one.