



## Analyze the One-Sidedness of “Clash of Civilizations”

Yue Yang

Room 905, Xiangjing Road No.70, Baiyun District, Guangzhou 510425, China

E-mail: [yylqq2007@163.com](mailto:yylqq2007@163.com)

### Abstract

No matter what it is the academic field or the political field, the clash of civilizations generates profound international effects. However, the sidedness of recognition accompanies with the clash of civilizations. Since the clash of civilization is still popular at present, it is necessary to clarify its sidedness. This paper tries to made analyses from these aspects: difference and commonness of civilizations, root of civilizations clash, civilizations clash and civilizations internal clash, civilizations clash and cooperation, western civilizations’ prospect, non-western civilizations’ prospect.

**Keywords:** Globalization, Civilization, Clash, Scientific analysis

The clash of civilizations is a paradigm advanced by Samuel. P. Huntington, which is used to describe contemporary world pattern. The time of globalization is accompanied with fast changing world situations in human history, which needs new theories and doctrines urgently. Under this background Samuel. P. Huntington studies and builds the clash of civilizations, considering the needs at the time. No matter what it is the academic field or the political field, the clash of civilizations generates profound international effects. However, the sidedness of recognition accompanies with the clash of civilizations. This paper abstracts the main viewpoints of The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, and analyzes the sidedness from several aspects.

### 1. The difference and commonness of civilizations

Samuel. P. Huntington’s clash of civilizations is mainly based on analyzing the differences of civilizations. He especially points out: “Philosophical assumption, basic value, social relationship, custom, and comprehensive life view are different sharply among various civilizations. .... The significant differences in politics and economic development for various civilizations are rooted in their different cultures apparently. (Samuel. P. Huntington, 1998, p8)” But he does not mention or make deeper researches on the commonness of civilizations. Differences of civilizations are objective facts indeed. But it is just one side of comparing civilizations. The comparative relationship of civilizations is dual. It concerns not only difference but also commonness. It is not convincible for civilizations comparison merely viewing differences but no commonness. Human civilizations have the widest and most fundamental commonness, concerning the common system, globe, target, chance, threat, profit, and defect. The dimension of commonness deserves more explorations. To discuss a question under the known conditions, human civilization is the only one in the universe. There is only one standard distinguishing human being from other species: whether there is civilization or not. Therefore, compared with differences, the commonness of civilizations is essential. To understand the commonness of civilization is more important than understanding the differences. If a study only focuses on differences but neglect the commonness, it is sided. With this base, the clash of civilizations lacks of the pre-condition with sufficient and necessary logic reasoning. So, it is short of strong reliability and persuasion.

### 2. The root of civilizations clash

Samuel. P. Huntington thinks that the root of clash civilizations is the difference of civilizations. He tries to ask and gives an answer: “Why does the cultural commonness drive the cooperation and cohesion among people, whereas cultural difference strengthens separation and conflict? (Samuel. P. Huntington, 1998, p113)” He further emphasizes: “The root of clash is the essential difference in social and cultural aspects. (Samuel. P. Huntington, 1998, p250). As a matter of fact, civilizations difference leads to civilizations clash, which merely reflects part of causation. Except that civilizations difference may cause civilizations clash, civilizations commonness can also lead to clashes. The commonness of civilizations does not completely exert effects on civilizations cooperation. Certain contradictory commonness among different civilizations or in one civilization, such as the competitiveness, self-interest, and parochialism of all parties, may serve as reasons for clashes among different civilizations or in one civilization. Therefore, not only the commonness of civilizations can drive the cooperation of civilizations, but the difference of civilizations can do it. The complementary differences of different civilizations or in one civilization can turn into the reason for the cooperation of different civilizations or in one civilization. For example, there are two methods A and B to deal with the same threat. The party with strong A and weak B and the party with weak A and strong B may become partners. Civilizations’ comparative relationship has differences and commonness at the same time. The mutual effects of civilizations are full of clashes and cooperation. They for four kinds of causation relationships: difference --> clash,

commonness -> clash, commonness -> cooperation, difference -> cooperation. Apparently, to emphasize on one side is improper.

### **3. The civilizations clash and civilization internal clash**

Samuel. P. Huntington mainly studies the clash of civilizations ----- from the title to the contents he names it as clash of civilizations. He discusses few on the commonness of civilizations. Surely, he also mentions in history that “most mutual commercial, cultural, and military effects happen in one civilization. For example, although India and China have been invaded or slaved by foreign nations sometimes, the two civilizations experience their long ‘warring time’ by themselves. Similarly, wars and trade between Greeks are more frequent than that between Greeks and Persians or other nations. (Samuel. P. Huntington, 1998, p35)” In history, European is not an exception. “They are in war constantly. In European countries, peace is only an exception but not a normal state. (Samuel. P. Huntington, 1998, p38)” But, he does not explain anything for positioning civilizations internal clash at a corner. “After experiencing clashes in several centuries, Western Europe realizes the peace. Wars tend to be unimaginable. (Samuel. P. Huntington, 1998, p245)” He is optimistic toward the western civilization but more worry about non-western civilizations. “In the coming time, the clash of civilizations is the greatest threat to world peace. (Samuel. P. Huntington, 1998, p372)” No matter when it is in world history or today’s global system, the clash of civilizations stays at the top level. But its frequency, intensity, and damage are not necessarily the largest. Civilization internal clash is at a lower level, but the frequency, intensity, and damage are maybe more serious. Samuel. P. Huntington uses the “western civil war 1939-1945” (Samuel. P. Huntington, 1998, p154) to name the World War II. The two world wars are civilization internal clashes undoubtedly. In other words, no world war is from the clash of civilizations. In practice, the largest damage on world peace is from civilization internal clash. Viewing from different lens, sometimes the clash of civilizations is in human wars, and sometimes the civilization internal clash. It is hard to determine which one serves as the largest threat to today’s world peace. At least there is not any reason that is convincible to push the civilization internal clash into a corner. Opposite to Samuel. P. Huntington’s viewpoint, “as for the issue of civilization (culture) clash, Professor Dieter. Senghaas emphasizes: what the world large cultures face is firstly the internal clash. It is more essential than ‘civilization collision (the clash between cultures)’. (Dieter. Senghaas, 2004, p3)”

### **4. The civilization clash and civilization cooperation**

Samuel. P. Huntington’s opinion toward the mutual effects of civilizations is sided. As he emphasizes on the clash of civilization, he neglects a more important, at least equal important, fact, namely the cooperation of civilizations. “Cold peace, cold war, trade war, semi-war, unstable peace, difficult relation, tight confrontation, competitive coexistence, and military match, maybe these words properly describe the relationship between different civilization subjects. Trust and friendship will be rare. (Dieter. Senghaas, 2004, p229)” However, the clash of civilizations is only one side of civilizations’ mutual effects. The mutual effects of civilizations are dual. Except for clashes, there is cooperation based on wide communications. In other words, there are two interactive ways between civilizations: clash and cooperation. The clash may disturb cooperation. Cooperation can help to solve the clash. The fact and the meanings of cooperation should not be neglected. International trade is to construct commercial channels and logistics net according to the distribution of resources and markets, and the supply-and-demand relationship. Here we can not find borders for civilizations. World travel lines bring all travelers to different scenes in the world. Here we can not find the special characteristics of cultural pattern either. In fields of education, science, arts, and sports, international cultural communication and cooperation are performed frequently in the internal civilization and between different civilizations. For some serious global issues, we have no choice but global cooperation. For example, managing the global financial crisis, getting rid of global economic regression, dealing with global climate changes, protecting global ecological environment, all these activities must depend on global cooperation. There are no borders for civilizations concerning the impacts of global financial crisis and environmental degradation. In order to solve these issues effectively, the international cooperation should be restricted by the border of civilizations. Although the global cooperation for certain issue is not satisfying, it steps forward. Compared with the clash, the cooperation of civilizations has more active constructive meanings.

### **5. The western civilization’s prospect**

Samuel. P. Huntington’s study has a strong subjective color. He is worry about the decline of western civilization. He is always protecting the traditional advantages of western civilization. Today, western civilization is still strong, which is at a leading position in science & technology field and economic field. However, the dominating effect of western civilization is weakening. It tends to be declining relatively. Western civilization faces challenges from outside. It is also confronted with internal problems. Samuel. P. Huntington emphasizes on the challenges from the outer. He advances specific countermeasures: “Facing the decline of western power, to protect the western civilization can benefit America and European countries. In order to reach this goal, they need: strengthen the integration of politics, economy, and military, and coordinate policies, in case of other countries in different civilizations getting advantages over the differences; absorb Central European countries, namely the Visegrad Group, the Baltic Republics, Slovenia, and Croatia

into EU and NATO; encourage Latin America to be westernization, and make Latin America combine with western countries as much as possible; depress the development of normal and abnormal military force in Islamic and Chinese countries; stop Japan betraying the west and following China; admit that Russia is the core country of the orthodox and admit that to insure the safety of the south is the legal right of Russia; maintain the west's advantages of technologies and military force over other civilizations; the more important is to realize that the interference of the west to other civilizations may be the only factor causing the instability of multiple civilizations and the potential global clash. (Dieter. Senghaas, 2004, p360)" These countermeasures are nothing but emphasizing on forming cliques. It is not creative. On the other hand, as facing challenges, western civilization falls in difficulties. Samuel. P. Huntington points out: "That is a declining civilization. In contrast to other civilizations, the west's rights in world politics, economy, and military fields is decreasing. The west wins the cold war. But it brings not a victory but a failure. The west pay more attentions to the internal problems and needs, because it faces a series of problems, such as the slow growth of economy, the population issue, unemployment, big government defects, drugs, and crimes. (Dieter. Senghaas, 2004, p76)" However, he does not lay stresses on the internal problems of western civilization just as how he treats the outer challenges. He does not advance relevant countermeasures. Contrary to Samuel. P. Huntington's judgment, there are greater crises in the internal problems of western civilization rather than outer challenges, which deserve more attentions and countermeasures. The key to determine the future of western civilization is not to deal with challenges from non-western civilizations but overcome the self vital problems. In other words, the prospect of western civilization is not determined by whether it can deal with the outer challenges effectively but whether it can overcome the internal problems properly. If the world victims the continuous decline of western civilization unfortunately, the grave-digger is nobody but itself. The internal problem of western civilization is the lagged-behind ecological environment protection, which fails to catch up with the social development. In other words, it is the lagged-behind progress of humanism spirit, which fails to catch up with the progress of material civilization. It also serves as a pre-warning for other non-western civilizations. Western civilization is a pioneer. Non-western civilizations should not rejoice in the calamity of western civilization's difficulty.

## 6. The prospect of non-western civilizations

Samuel. P. Huntington thinks that the development of non-western civilizations challenges and threatens western civilization. "The reason for the new clash between Islam and the west lies in the right and the culture. Who governs whom? Who is the governor? Who is under the governance? (Dieter. Senghaas, 2004, p234)" "The rise of China serves as the most essential challenge for America. (Dieter. Senghaas, 2004, p254)" Samuel. P. Huntington supposes that the western civilization and non-western civilizations are in a war for survival. He hopes that: the western civilization sustains its advantage position and non-western civilizations stay the disadvantage positions. Non-western civilizations submit to and are controlled by the western civilization forever. At every time in history, the development of civilization is unequal. Some are faster and some slower. Some are stronger and some weaker. Some are latest and some are lagged-behind. It is inevitable and natural for the distance of civilizations' development. The different development levels of civilizations will cause unfair rights distribution and unequal social positions, what signalizes the evolvement of human being. In the clash of civilizations, the distance of development level → unfair rights distribution and unequal social positions turns into an eternal law, what becomes a fixed thinking and is used to judge situations. In fact, this law is untenable. Although it is inevitable for the development distance between people, human is always pursuing for fairness and equality of nations, countries, and civilizations. Maybe the following ideas are nearer to the truth than the complicated and sided view of the clash of civilizations.

No matter what the difference is, western civilization has no initiative advantages over other civilizations.

No matter how the development is, different civilizations should enjoy equal rights and positions.

It is not necessary to get an approval of the west. Non-western civilizations have the endowed right of independent development.

If cooperation surpasses clash, world will enter a new stage in which all human civilizations enjoy their prosperities.

## References

Dieter. Senghaas. Translated by Zhang, Wenwu. (2004). *Zivilisierung Wider Willen*. Beijing: Xinhua Publishing House. Dec.

Samuel. P. Huntington. Translated by Zhou, Qi. (1998). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Beijing: Xinhua Publishing House. Mar.