
**Dan POPESCU, DHC, PhD Professor,
«Lucian Blaga» University of Sibiu**

CIVILIZATIONS FROM «CLASHES» TO EVOLUTION

*«Roaming and books- these baths of
light for the heart and the mind»*

Panait Istrati

It has been almost 14 years since then, in 1996 a book literally shocked the world of economics, but especially that of sociology, political science, history, the philosophy of the time. The volume was called "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order" (in short "The Clash of Civilizations"...), New York, Simon and Schuster, a few months or a year later numerous translations of the book appearing, among which the French translation „Le choc des civilisations et la refondation de l'ordre mondial”, but also one or even several Romanian translations. The author, Samuel Huntington. He was born in New York, in April 1927, completed part of his studies at the University of Yale, at less than 25 he was already part of the teaching staff of the famous American university of Harvard, and at 30 years old his first book will appear, which will make waves and trigger heated debates: "The Soldier and the State". Oriented towards democracies and international problems, he will enter politics, in 1968 becoming a diplomatic advisor for the democrat presidential candidate Hubert H.Humphrey. Ten years later, he will be a member of the National Council of Security under Jim Carter's presidency. He will not give up the academic environment, being one of the founders of the famous magazine Foreign Policy, holding conferences and publishing many papers, articles, etc.

Until his death, on 24 December 2008 but also after that moment, he will remain the author of one book. The one quoted above «The clash of civilizations». Beyond the waves and reverberations triggered by this volume, not few researchers are claiming that the ideas put forth in this volume have fueled mainly the neoconservatives' theses, of similar

political orientations and that the errors they contained are becoming increasingly obvious. And opinions to contradict such statements are- it seems- fewer and fewer and increasingly diluted ...

So, the shock, the clash of civilizations. In his work, S. Huntington shows that in the post- cold war world conflicts will no longer place nations and ideologies into opposition, but cultural and religious groups. «A thesis taken over by the American neoconservatives and by all those who tried to account for the incompatibility existing between Western countries and the rest of the world», this is how Professor Bruno Cabanes, from the Yale University summarized the main message and impact of the book. According to Huntington, the world is divided into cultural spheres which he calls civilizations, the clash of which is at the basis of present and future conflicts. S.H. distinguishes 8 such types of civilizations, namely the West, the Latin-American civilizations, Islamism, Orthodoxism (around Russia), Hinduism, Nipponism, the Chinese civilization, and finally, the African one. This is the assumed area of clashes, of present and possibly future conflicts. However, his book puts forth something else, something which contradicts many of his claims before and after that. Namely «the Western belief (conviction, n.n.) in the universal vocation of its culture presents three major flaws: it is false, it is immoral, it is dangerous.». In other words, while remaining in the American zone, Huntington points out that the United States have erred and are still erring when they want to force their values and culture upon the others. Tensions may escalate resulting into a serious inter-civilization conflict. Which, as Bruno Cananes was writing «has not been in line with George Bush's and Dick Cheeney's policy in Afganistan and Irak.». Let us now watch Obama, of a different extraction, a genuine intellectual, who according to many is rather promising in his actions.

Actually, we would like to add to what Huntington wrote and the Yale professor interpreted, with more wisdom the United States do not even need or would not even need armed conflicts in order to impose their interests, values and culture. With more wisdom they can do this by seduction, and history, more exactly, the world's economic history irrefutably proves the effectiveness of such «technologies». Economic «seduction» and not only, obviously peaceful, and not armed constriction. It is on such a basis that the world has been going forward, a perfectly founded claim even if we think about what the Western culture- not

necessarily and exclusively the American one- has represented for other civilizations in S.H.'s acceptance.

Although sometimes interpreted as such, Huntington has not represented and is not representing the « zealot » of American expansion by force, the « zealot » as such of- what he sometimes calls- American imperialism. The intellectual world has also been puzzled by the way in which S.H. defined civilizations, thus largely ignoring cultural exchanges, cultural interferences and the « creoleness » as such of civilizations. The American politologist also overrated religious confrontations at the expense of national confrontations, rather frequent and bloody too, and being intertwined with the religious ones. It is true, the shock of « 11 September 2001 » seemed to confirm most of Huntington's ideas, but one should not stop here in evaluating the present and the future, as many other leads exist in the area on co-work and collaboration. Yet, Bruno Cabanes writes that Huntington's texts are most dangerously relevant for the internal policy of some large states. Because these defend a certain turning of the Western civilization towards itself and an extremely rigorous immigration policy. Which can generate obstacles not so much as regards the general desirable evolution of the world, but against it.

What is obviously remarkable is the way the perspective of “shock”, of “clashes” is examined and the way in which Huntington sets the elements of the equation. However, the vision regarding the “clash” of civilizations mainly from the perspective of religious differences and divergences, is rather limited. How about the “rich-poor clash” within states and outside them? How about the “clashes” between philosophies, evaluation criteria and values within states and outside them? Huntington is actually bringing to our attention not so much an exclusive problem as a working method that we can only appreciate.

... The true “shock”, the true “clashes” in today's world are fundamentally those with ignorance, as another American, Edward Said, a critic of Huntington, too, shows in one of its studies “The clash with ignorance”. And one cannot fail to agree with him. Ignorance, more than anything else, seems to be the most perfidious evil undermining the foundation of a world that, anyway, should become better ...