

Moving Beyond Common Framings of the Post-Western World

Rohan Hazell:

Two of the biggest questions posed about the shift to a post-Western world are what will happen to the nature of globalisation and how will international cooperation change? There are many theories.

On the one hand, it has been argued that as non-Western nations rise in power, globalisation as we know it will come to an end with nations becoming more protectionist and divided.

For example, many commentators fear that the rise of large powerful nations like China may result in conflict between the old and new world orders. But as Professor Wang Hui of Tsinghua University in Beijing points out, these theories are based on 20th century understandings of the world and the changes to globalisation and international cooperation will be far more nuanced.

He helps to clarify that the post-Western world will be characterised by solidarity and a more inclusive set of global structures both for trade and geopolitics.

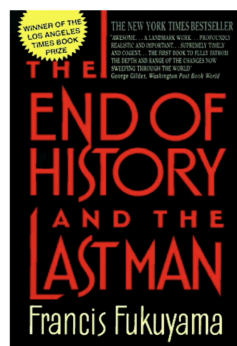
Professor Wang Hui:



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The post-Western order differs from *the end of history* and *the clash of civilisation* theories I think. We know that *the end of history* as a theory was raised by Francis Fukuyama in 1989 and then later he developed it into a book. And basically he thought that after the collapse of the Soviet Union as the Eastern European socialist order or the bloc, there was kind of the trend to move towards liberal democracy plus the market economy, which means the end of the history. So basically these are evolutionary processes towards the end of history. He tried to argue for that.



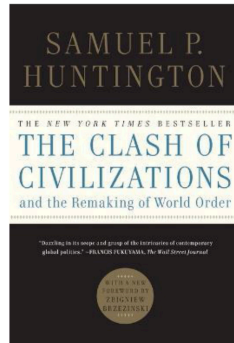
Source: fukuyama.stanford.edu

End of History Theory

A political concept where a particular political, economic, or social system becomes the end-point of humanity's sociocultural evolution and the final form of human government

As for *the clash of civilisations* by Huntington, it was raised after the end of the so-called Cold War. And basically he thought that before that there was a clash between the nation states, between the ideologies and all these kinds of conflicts. What replaces that will be the clash of

civilisations. The culture and the civilisation identity become the key concepts to describe the clash in the future.



Clash of Civilisations Theory

Differences in identity, religion,
and culture will shape conflicts
in the post-Cold War era

But obviously here, *the end of history*, a lot of the people criticise that theory because in the last decades we perceived the deep crisis within the dominant political system, not only in other places but also within the West. Even Francis Fukuyama himself described that as a political decay.

And as for *the clash of civilisations*, of course, a lot of the descriptions and analysis focused on the Western and the Islamic war, and so on and so forth. But nevertheless, if you look at the trade war or other technology war and Russian-Ukraine war, it's difficult to use that framework to analyse it. So there were deep self-contradictions within these theories.

If not the End of History or the Clash of Civilisations, then what?

When we talk about the transition to post-Western world order, I think that we should go back to think about the whole history of the 19th century, 20th century up to now because the theory of the end of the history actually implies that the whole failure of the socialist movement and the national liberation movements and so on and so forth. But actually, here we can see that in the 20th century, especially in the second half of the 20th century, many countries like China, India, achieved their independence through different ways, decolonisation, Chinese revolution and so on and so forth, and developed their own way for industrialisation.

So you can see, for example, in Asia, many other countries developed their economy. China, India, Japan, Korea and many Southeast Asian countries, those countries are very different, meaning culturally, politically, and their social structures are very different. However, what's common between them is that they dislike going back to colonial times. They threw their

struggles for their own independence, so that I think created the basis for accelerating the transition to the post-Western world order.

So I remember that some scholars also used the term post-colonialism, but now, if you look at the Western countries, in Europe, America, the cultures, political elements or any others, and also especially economically, the Western monopoly to the large extent was weakened. So people also talk about the post-western era coming. So in that sense, it transformed the whole world's structures.

Of course, it's difficult, because if you look at the current situation, especially the American economic, technological policy, and obviously they want to keep their own monopoly and domination in the world. So that was the reason for so many geopolitical conflicts continuing. So in that sense, the Asian, African countries together with Latin America, are staying together for solidarity. For example, since 1955, the Bandung Conference, there were a series of efforts for coexistence and to maintain peace. So that's the effort. It's obvious there.



We should recognise that we came from the long process in the 19-20th century, which was dominated by the Western culture. It is the process. So, for example, in our education system, most of the knowledge paradigm, framework, we learned mainly from the West.

So in that sense, our knowledge about our own society, sometimes also shaped by that kind of social science framework, humanities framework and theory and so on and so forth. We need to have a reflection on that.

Second, we should recognise that we are quite ignorant about the countries and the cultures, especially the non-Western cultures, because we are more or less familiar with the Western history and the narratives dominated by Western narratives about other parts of the world.

However, we have no experience and still few people really have the capacity to communicate with the people from the different cultural backgrounds. So we need to enhance the cooperation and the communication, interaction between the countries, especially the non-Western countries.

So in that sense, first of all, we change our mind and change our knowledge and then develop a more real, cosmopolitan, real international perspective to think about our own self. So the self-identity is also based on the richness, how rich that you can look upon you from different perspectives. So more communications like a South-South dialogues are very important and a chance to do some reform in our education curriculum and so on and so forth.

Following the deepening process of your mutual understanding, I think that will be very helpful for the development of these kind of political economic cooperation and communications.

Rohan Hazell:

Common framings of the post-Western world are overly simplistic. It is clearly not the case, for example, that any political, economic or social system could represent the endpoint of humanity's development. Nor are Western and non-Western nations destined to engage in conflict as the latter rise in power.

Non-Western countries are increasingly seeking solidarity with one another and Western nations now have a responsibility to encourage this rather than rejecting or undermining it. Now, these geopolitical shifts can seem too big-picture to be connected to the average person like you or I.

But Professor Wang Hui reminds us to move beyond theory. Education around the world, for example, is still heavily influenced by Western systems and approaches. Equally, non-Western cultures are often not well understood due to a lack of representation in education and media.

This impacts us all, regardless of what part of the world you are from. So if you are to develop a truly global perspective, it is important to enrich yourself with knowledge from other nations.

This will enable greater understanding and empathy at the individual level and greater political and economic cooperation at the national level.