

EWIS 2025, Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland, 2-4 July 2025

## **Clash of civilizations? The return of cultural geopolitics and its challenge to liberal hegemony**

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### **Conveners**

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In recent years, pundits have heralded the return of geopolitics amidst the rise of authoritarian political forces around the world. Those forces have challenged the liberal order's promise of a neat separation of culturally and territorially bound nation-states. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, for example, has cast a spotlight on the regime's conception of itself as the centre of a borderless Russian-speaking world and Eurasian civilization, in which it has special rights and responsibilities. Such civilizational imaginaries are (re)emerging in various places, from visions of Judeo-Christian civilization among national conservatives in Europe and America to the anti-secular politics of neo-Hindutva. Such imaginaries aim to reconfigure international orders on the basis of culture.

The idea that we live in a post-ideological age marked by clashing civilizations is certainly not new. However, as far as liberal globalization is distorting peoples' sense of place and mission in the world, we can expect to see a rise in civilizational claims by varied political actors. Scholars perceive the rise of civilizationism in different ways. Some stress their links to illiberal ideologies, citing the reanimation of geopolitical worldviews based on the ethno-cultural ideas of radical conservative thinkers. Scholars of postcolonialism and critical geopolitics, on the other hand, have stressed that liberal norms are a particular ideological construction upholding Euro-Atlantic hegemony/civilization. Faced with the symbolic and material subordination of liberalising pressures, postcolonial states often draw on civilizational discourse to assert their independence and particularity. Over the years, disillusionment with the globalizing liberal order seems to have created a discursive-ideological space for identitarian geopolitics. That liminal space accommodates political entrepreneurs of various ideological affiliations.

We invite submissions from scholars interested in civilizational conceptions of international order, their discursive and intellectual histories, and the political projects which encapsulate those visions. Civilizationism is deployed by illiberal and liberal actors alike. Therefore, we welcome papers that explore the hybridity of civilizational imaginaries and their importance in moments of transition. Applicants are encouraged to reflect on the following questions:

- Which cultural or civilizational visions of international order are on the rise today? What are their genealogies and conceptual histories?
- What is distinctive about today's civilizational imaginaries? Do they represent a substantive or superficial transformation?
- In what ways do civilizational imaginaries challenge or buttress the contemporary international order? What do they mean for international affairs in practice?
- How do contemporary civilizational discourses (re)imagine international political geographies?
- How should the study of civilizational geopolitics be approached?