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This conference examines the transition from the unipolar, liberal, and universalist post-Cold War era to a new multipolar world marked by a "clash of civilizations" and sovereignist ideologies. Samuel, from the European Movement Finland, traces this shift through events such as the Gulf War, 9/11, the 2008 financial crisis, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the 2026 US-Israeli airstrikes on Iran. The presentation contrasts Fukuyama's "End of History" with Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations," arguing that the latter increasingly describes today's geopolitical reality. It identifies four critical dependencies—on US military and financial power, Chinese industry, Russian energy (historically), and the imperative to support Ukraine—that expose Europe. To reduce these vulnerabilities and build "open strategic autonomy," the speaker proposes targeted measures in economics, technology, energy, and defence, while addressing the EU's internal divisions. The ultimate vision is of Europe as an "ark," preserving liberal, democratic, and open societies through the current global turbulence.

1. The Changing World Order

• The Post-Cold War Unipolar Moment

- Began with Operation Desert Storm (early 1991), a UN-authorized coalition of 35 countries to liberate Kuwait, illustrating a rules-based system enforced by collective action.
- The US was the sole superpower; Francis Fukuyama's "End of History" argued that liberal democracy and market capitalism were the final form of government.
- Evidence of liberal universalism: the formation of the EU (1993), Finland's accession (1995), China's WTO accession, and the EU's 2004 enlargement to include former Eastern Bloc states.

• Erosion of the Liberal Order

- The foundations of the unipolar world cracked through events initially treated as exceptions but revealing structural change.
- **Key Events:** 9/11 shattered the illusion of Western moral consensus; the US-led invasion of Iraq without UN authorization; the 2008 financial crisis; the Eurozone debt crisis and economic populism; the migration crisis and anti-migration populism; Brexit; Trump's first term; COVID-19; and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine (February 2022).

• The New Multipolar Order

- Shift from the Gulf War era consensus to the "law of the strongest," illustrated by the 2026 US-Israeli airstrikes on Iran without UN authorization or notification to European allies.
- Citing Antonio Gramsci: *"The old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born: now is the time of monsters,"* capturing the turbulence of transition.
- The Global South, including BRICS+ countries (China, India, South Africa, Brazil), now has a collective GDP (PPP) comparable to the old Western order and will shape the future.
- The US, under Trump, is a "geopolitical swing state," even voting "no" on a UN resolution for a just and lasting peace in Ukraine.

2. Competing Ideological Framework

• Fukuyama vs. Huntington

- The current ideological conflict continues between Fukuyama's universalism and Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations?"
- Huntington's theory, once dismissed, argues that post-Cold War conflicts re-emerge along deeper civilizational, religious, and historical lines.
- The "clash of civilizations" narrative is actively used by leaders like Viktor Orbán (defence against Brussels/Islam), Vladimir Putin ("Russki Mir"), JD Vance, Nigel Farage, and Donald Trump; it also appeared in a US National Security Strategy.

• **Universalism vs. Sovereignism**

- **Liberal Universalism:** Principles such as human dignity, equality, fundamental rights, and democracy are universal, enshrined in law, and enforced by institutions like the EU—the most ambitious attempt to organize political life around these values.
- **Sovereignism (Particularism):** Argues that "universal" principles reflect the values of the powerful; claims that nations/civilizations should define their own values; sees international law as a tool of the strong, with autonomy and "might makes right" as the only honest political principles.
- **Warning:** While sovereignist critiques of Western power have validity, a world without universal principles leads to the domination of brute power, where the strong consume the weak, echoing the pre-World War I order.

3. Major Global Powers and Their Roles

• **The United States**

- Under Trump, the US abandoned multilateralism, becoming unreliable and sometimes hostile to European interests.
- The National Security Strategy envisions funding ideologically aligned sovereignist parties in Europe (e.g., the Alliance of Sovereign Nations Europe).
- NATO is treated as a "defence racket"; previously unthinkable actions (e.g., threatening to invade Greenland) no longer seem implausible.

• **China**

- The most significant systemic challenger, aiming to become the world's leading state by 2049.
- Thrived within the liberal economic order: "world's factory," largest US creditor, and key processor of rare earths vital for Europe's green transition.
- Despite its totalitarian system, presents itself as the champion of national sovereignty and a multipolar world.

• **Russia**

- A "spoiler agent" with a weak, fossil fuel-dependent economy; its superpower status rests on its Cold War-era nuclear arsenal and a war economy army.
- Actively destabilizes European politics, supports regimes from Belarus to Central Africa, and runs a global disinformation network.
- Seeks not to build a new order but to destroy the old one—indirectly benefiting China.

• **Other Powers**

- Smaller powers (Israel, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE) carve out their own regional spheres of influence.

4. Europe's Vulnerabilities and Strategic Autonomy

• Europe's Paradoxical Position

- **On paper:** A superpower—27 states, 440 million citizens, the world's largest single market, significant regulatory influence ("Brussels effect").
- **In practice:** Often reactive; faces structural challenges—fastest-warming continent, aging and declining population, shrinking share of global GDP.

• Four Critical Dependencies

- **United States:** Economic/financial dominance and military guarantees.
- **China:** Industrial dependence—especially for green tech (solar, batteries, EVs) and hardware.
- **Russia/Ukraine:** New dependence due to the need to support Ukraine and deter Russia.
- **Internal Divisions:** Veto instrumentalization and externally sponsored populism.

• The Goal of Open Strategic Autonomy

- Strengthen Europe while preserving an open, trade-based model by deliberately mitigating critical vulnerabilities.
- **Economic Cover:** Complete single markets—especially the Capital Markets Union; consider Eurobonds for critical projects. European savings currently flow to US markets like Nasdaq.
- **Technological Cover:** Treat the information environment as critical infrastructure; invest in quantum computing and cyber defence; counter US social media/AI and Chinese hardware dominance.
- **Energy Cover:** Take political action against energy coercion (e.g., cheap Russian gas offers); develop European clean energy industries; secure critical raw materials; reduce dependence on US LNG and Chinese green tech manufacturing.
- **Defence Cover:** Increase defence budgets and unify procurement; establish permanent EU-level joint procurement, common standards, and specializations to prevent 78% of defence spending from flowing to non-European industries.

5. Proposed Policy Actions

• Managing Relations with Major Powers

- **United States:** Build military autonomy and use diplomacy to limit political risks; be prepared to stand firm if necessary (e.g., Greenland crisis).
- **China:** Pursue realistic hedging—not full decoupling; balance dependencies between the US and China; find alternative suppliers for critical security sectors.
- **Russia:** Maintain full isolation, disinvestment, and sanctions as long as the war in Ukraine continues; redouble support for Ukraine.

• Addressing Internal Division

- Expand the use of Qualified Majority Voting (QMV), potentially a "super QMV," in foreign policy and enlargement.
- Strengthen budgetary safeguards; protect democracy and the rule of law within the EU.

• Europe's Future Vision

- Europe as an "ark"—not a fortress, but a vessel preserving liberal, democratic, and open societies through the storm of global change to calmer waters.