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## Clash of Civilizations, or Realism and Liberalism Déjà Vu? Some Evidence\*

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We assess the degree to which propositions from Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* can account for the incidence of militarized interstate disputes between countries during the period 1950–92. We find that such traditional realist influences as contiguity, alliances, and relative power, and liberal influences of joint democracy and interdependence, provide a much better account of interstate conflict. Pairs of states split across civilizational boundaries are no more likely to become engaged in disputes than are other states *ceteris paribus*. Even disputes between the West and the rest of the world, or with Islam, were no more common than those between or within most other groups. Among Huntington's eight civilizations, interstate conflict was significantly less likely only within the West; dyads in other civilizations were as likely to fight as were states split across civilizations, when realist and liberal influences are held constant. The dominance of a civilization by a core state, democratic or not, does little to inhibit violence within the civilization. Contrary to the thesis that the clash of civilizations will replace Cold War rivalries as the greatest source of conflict, militarized interstate disputes across civilizational boundaries became less common, not more so, as the Cold War waned. Nor do civilizations appear to have an important indirect influence on interstate conflict through the realist or liberal variables. They help to predict alliance patterns but make little contribution to explaining political institutions or commercial interactions. We can be grateful that Huntington challenged us to consider the role that civilizations might play in international relations, but there is little evidence that they define the fault lines along which international conflict is apt to occur.

His book conveys a challenge, like he wants us to refute him  
Daring us, by scaring us, to doubt him or dispute him  
Which is fine for academic-argument-displaying  
As long as someone powerful won't act on what he's saying.

(Tipson, 1997: 168–169)

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financial support. The data used in our analyses can be obtained from:  
<http://www.yale.edu/usny/democ/democ1.htm> and  
[http://bama.ua.edu/~joneal/jpr2000\\_data](http://bama.ua.edu/~joneal/jpr2000_data).

## Introduction

Samuel Huntington's (1996) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* has proven to be one of the most influential recent books on international relations. The responses range from laudatory to scathing. The quotation above is from one of the most perceptive critiques as well as the most amusing one.<sup>1</sup> Such a range of reactions is not surprising. Like Huntington's other work, it is smart, never dull, and states a provocative thesis. It is intended (p. 14) to offer 'a more meaningful and useful lens through which to interpret international developments than any alternative paradigm'. It demands attention. It seems to make sense of some very important current conflicts, such as those between the USA and Iraq. It fits part of the story for the war between Serbia and NATO, though not the significant part that found NATO aligned with Serbia's Muslim Albanian minority. But even for those conflicts that it seems to fit, there may be better explanations; and being right on occasion does not mean that an argument is correct as a general thesis.

Huntington's core claim (p. 321) is that 'clashes of civilizations are the greatest threat to world peace', and that 'in the post-Cold War world the most important distinctions among peoples are not ideological, political, or economic. They are cultural' (p. 21). That is a bold claim and, if true, would mark a

significant change in world politics. Before the mid-20th century, many interstate conflicts occurred within a multipolar Western world, most dramatically in the case of the two World Wars. Conflict among the Western states declined when so much of the world was caught in the bipolar tensions of the Cold War; and the once popular classification of states into first, second, and third worlds indicates that hostilities after World War II involved diverse groups, North versus South as well as East versus West. But these characterizations were based primarily on ideology and differences in economic development. Huntington proposes to replace them with a paradigm stressing the importance of civilizational differences (p. 21).

His central theme is that 'culture and cultural identities, which at the broadest level are civilizational identities, are shaping patterns of cohesion, disintegration, and conflict in the post-Cold War world' (p. 20). Thus his argument is less about the distant past and applies only partially to the early decades of the Cold War. But after the Iranian revolution of 1979, 'an intercivilizational quasi-war between Islam and the West' opened up (p. 216; see also p. 185) and, in the 1980s, conflicts between civilizations increasingly replaced those between communists and capitalists. In the future, many of the most violent, prolonged international conflicts will be across civilizational cleavages or fault lines (p. 253). Recently, he declared, 'The interplay of power and culture will *decisively* mold patterns of alliance and antagonism among states in the coming years' (Huntington, 1999: 46, emphasis added).

If Huntington's characterization of the recent past were correct, then his understanding of the present and predictions of the future would warrant careful attention by scholars and policymakers alike. We conclude, however, that the 'clash of civilizations' perspective is mistaken about the past,

<sup>1</sup> Huntington (1996) is an expansion and slight modification of the analysis in Huntington (1993a,b). All page references to Huntington, unless otherwise indicated, are to the book. As of the end of 1999, the *Social Sciences Citation Index* reported well over 500 citations of the book and articles. Kurth (1998) strikes a laudatory note; scathing attacks include Holmes (1997) and most of the responses by Ajami, Bartley, Binyan, Kirkpatrick, & Mahbubani in *Foreign Affairs* 1993, 72(4): 2–21. Other contemporary and widely read books on the alleged power of cultural differences in promoting conflict include Kaplan (1993) and Moynihan (1993). The quotation is from Tipson and the ones at the beginning and end of the article are reprinted by permission of *Foreign Affairs*, copyright 1997 by the Council on Foreign Relations.

selectively interprets current events, and does not offer a sound guide to the future. Civilizational differences add little to existing realist and liberal explanations of violent interstate conflict.

### Civilizations and Identity

Huntington's thesis that cultural differences produce conflict has deep roots in social psychology (p. 67). At its heart is the distinction between the in-group and the outsider, with in-group cohesion attained by nurturing conflict with those that are different. Huntington asserts that 'identity at any level – personal, tribal, racial, civilizational – can only be defined in relation to an "other", a different person, tribe, race, or civilization' (p. 129). The sociological version of this view is commonly associated with Simmel (1898); it was interpreted and expanded by Coser (1956). It has been widely applied – with mixed results – in international relations theory and research.<sup>2</sup> The focus of much of this work is on the conditions under which intragroup cohesion may be enhanced or fractured by confrontation with others. One version asserts that humans are essentially hardwired for social conflict based on an in-group/out-group distinction. Shaw & Wang (1988: 207), for example, claim that: 'Humanity's propensity for war is the outcome of thousands of years of evolution during which cognition and intolerance of out-group members have been shaped by priorities of gene–culture coevolution.'

Social identity theory is a social–psychological effort to interpret the same phenomena (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Sidanius, 1993). It has been applied to states and national societies by the constructivist school of international relations. The constructivist turn is intriguing, because, as Mercer (1995) notes,

<sup>2</sup> A more nuanced perspective is Stein (1976). The theory's applications to international relations are reviewed by Levy (1989) and Heldt (1997).

these theorists foresee the broadening of group identities to include a variety of others with whom it is possible to identify and live in peace. Yet social identity theory postulates that this broader identity can only be achieved vis-à-vis some newly defined 'other'.<sup>3</sup> In this view, then, the vision of Deutsch and his colleagues of a pluralistic community 'of mutual sympathy and loyalties; of "we-feeling", trust, and mutual consideration, of partial identification in terms of self-images and interests; of mutually successful predictions of behavior' (Adler & Barnett, 1998) implicitly leaves others on the outside.

For Mercer, this is a critical flaw in the constructivist project. Risse-Kappen (1995) also notes that the sense of mutual identity among democrats, based on a political culture of peaceful conflict resolution, may give rise to a perception of otherness and threat regarding those (non-democrats) who do not demonstrably share that culture. Similarly, non-democracies may see democracies as threatening.<sup>4</sup> A concern with the clash of civilizations is therefore part of a larger concern with the implications of identity for theories of the democratic peace and of international relations generally.

The dilemma posed by the politics of identity is relevant only to cultural but not institutional theories regarding the separate peace among democracies. Insofar as the cultural (or normative) interpretation of the democratic peace – derived from Deutsch's work – is true, there is danger that democracies will see other states as outside their cultural and normative boundaries, and hence

<sup>3</sup> Mercer also gives a good review of this literature. For major constructivist applications, see Onuf (1989) and Wendt (1999).

<sup>4</sup> Also consider Doyle (1986: 116): 'Fellow liberals benefit from a presumption of amity; non-liberals suffer from a presumption of enmity.' This is consistent with the hypothesis in Hermann & Kegley (1995) that democracies will see one another as part of an in-group to be defended against outsiders.

potential if not actual enemies. In the normative interpretation of the democratic peace, democracies think that they abide by an ethic of nonviolent conflict resolution, but they must always fear that autocracies will exploit their inherent peacefulness (Russett, 1993). This may exacerbate the destructive features of the Hobbesian self-help system with regard to those 'others'.

Concern that democracies may demonize non-democratic states is allayed, however, both by evidence and by theory concerning the influence of democratic institutions on foreign policy. In our most recent analyses (Russett & Oneal, 2001), we find that, over the full sweep of the 20th century, democracies not only are much more peaceful with each other than are other kinds of states, but are no more dispute-prone with autocracies than autocracies are with each other. Institutional (or structural) accounts of the democratic peace, which do not rely on reference to common identity, are consistent with that empirical result. They rest principally on the consequences of rational self-interested behavior by political leaders who want to retain power, and on the electoral consequences in democratic states of fighting costly wars, especially in a losing effort (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 1992, 1999; Stam, 1997).

A similar distinction regarding the importance of identity applies to competing interpretations of the influence of economic interdependence on interstate relations. The Deutschian account regards economic transactions as means of communicating perceptions and interests in ways that generally strengthen the sense of mutual identification. In contrast, rational choice theorists focus on the economic self-interest of parties to these transactions in maintaining and intensifying commercial exchange (Oneal & Russett, 1997). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* therefore is relevant to the debate about the merits and

implications of constructivist analyses of international politics.

Huntington opens a window onto questions about the relation of culture to the material and ideological expressions of civilizations. Perhaps civilizations, rather than directly influencing the likelihood of interstate violence, instead shape the patterns of security arrangements, political institutions, and economic practices that constitute much of international behavior and condition who fights whom. Do the boundaries of civilizations largely define the broad characteristics of the international behavior of states within them? If so, the effect of culture on the likelihood of military conflict might occur indirectly through these important intermediary influences.

Certainly this possibility is evident in Huntington's work. His greatest worry is concerned with the civilizational divide between the West and all other civilizations – the 'West and the rest', as he puts it – that can be traced largely to Western acceptance of the principles of democracy and human rights and their more precarious standing elsewhere. He sees particular danger for the West from Islamic states. In his view, fundamental differences between these two cultures concerning the source of governmental legitimacy – whether the will of the people or scripture and religious authority – are largely insurmountable. If, however, Islamic societies are capable of becoming more democratic, then the division between the West and Islam should become less acrimonious.<sup>5</sup> Much the same would apply to the West's other major adversary in Huntington's crystal ball: China and the Sinic civilization (p. 238).

Treating civilizations in this way is

<sup>5</sup> Midlarsky (1998) suggests that cultural barriers to liberal democracy in Islamic societies are formidable but that an Islamic version of democracy that guarantees political rights is possible. On this same theme, see also Weede (1998), Esposito & Voll (1996), and several of the chapters in Garnham & Tessler (1995).

problematic. As Huntington acknowledges, the political cultures of Germany and Japan changed radically after 1945 from their prewar fascism, in both cases becoming democratic and substantially anti-militarist. Yet both Germany and Japan remain deeply rooted in their distinctive civilizations (Berger, 1996). States, and their citizens, can learn from their own experience and the history of others that international conflict is more costly than it is worth (on learning in international relations, see Tetlock, 1991; Levy, 1994; Reiter, 1996). It is important to determine, therefore, whether civilizations are the root cause of interstate conflict, or whether the causes of conflict are primarily political and economic institutions, norms, and practices that are amenable to change. It is also relevant to consider whether civilizational differences account for variation in these phenomena.

A subordinate theme in Huntington's work is the importance of 'core' or dominant states within civilizations and their ability to attract countries of similar culture and repulse those that are culturally dissimilar as a means of organizing collective security (p. 155). When integrated around such a pole, countries develop a more cohesive identity that minimizes their potentially antagonistic relations; those without such a stabilizing influence are candidates for greater intra-civilizational conflict. This is a vision of a world comprised of spheres of influence, in which core states foster harmony and reduce violence within their civilizations.<sup>6</sup> Through negotiations and the exercise of power politics with the core states of other civilizations, strong cores can provide a degree of order even across civilizations (p. 208). Thus Huntington declares, 'The components of order in today's more complex and heterogeneous

world are found within and between civilizations. The world will be ordered on the basis of civilizations, or not at all' (p. 156).

The argument that a big state can dominate the relations of smaller states under its hegemony – both pacifying relations among them and controlling their relations with outsiders – is found in many realist discussions. It is also central to Kupchan's (1998) prescription for order in a multipolar international system.<sup>7</sup> Kupchan regards a multipolar international system as potentially peaceful, providing that each of the major regional poles is itself ordered as a benign hegemony or consensual polar formation. In his view, peace within the regions cannot be secured by empire, unfettered power, or exploitative behavior. For a region organized on sounder bases, the peace characteristic of its internal relations can be extended to other benignly organized regions. 'Securing peace within regions is an essential first step toward securing peace globally' (Kupchan, 1998: 42). According to Kupchan, a modern hegemon must moderate its realist impulses if it is to be effective and accept the institutional and normative constraints characteristic of democracy.

### Exploring the Effects of Civilizational Differences

To evaluate Huntington's thesis, identifying the world's major civilizations and their boundaries is critical. Although he sometimes uses the terms 'culture' and 'civilization' interchangeably, he also emphasizes their differences. Cultures and civilizations do share common elements, such as religion, language, customs, history, and institutions; but 'civilization' is the key to understanding interstate conflict because it is 'the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest

<sup>6</sup> Note also Huntington (1999: 49): 'For the reasons I set forth in my book, the core state of a civilization can better maintain order among the members of its extended family than can someone outside the family.'

<sup>7</sup> Hegemonic stability theory is commonly associated with Gilpin (1981) and Krasner (1985); Kurth (1998) cites it approvingly.

level of cultural identity people have' (p. 43). Despite admonitions that civilizations are dynamic and have no fixed boundaries, he believes that, in the short term, most states or groups of states can be grouped into eight civilizations: the Western, Sinic, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, Buddhist, and African.

Many criticisms can be made of the clash of civilizations perspective. Huntington's list of civilizations is to some degree arbitrary and, to the extent to which he acknowledges intracivilizational differences, the image of civilization as a source of international order begins to dissolve. The criteria for assigning states to civilizations are not always clear, as we note below. Huntington also privileges broad loyalties to civilizations over more specific cultural or ethnic identities, including those that operate at the level of the nation-state. He claims in effect that civilizational identities are typically more decisive than nationalism in accounting for sources of conflict. (This is particularly doubtful in the case of the Islamic civilization, where interests tied to particular states have repeatedly triumphed over Islamic or pan-Arab sentiments.) His discussion of malleability and change within civilizations, along axes of Westernization and modernization (p. 72), is too simple.

These conceptual critiques suggest specific empirical analyses by which to evaluate his arguments. Yet despite the attention Huntington's theory has received, systematic statistical analyses of his propositions are rare. The most substantial work regarding interstate relations is by Henderson (1998; see also Henderson, 1997), who finds only a modest role for cultural differences in explaining conflict. Henderson does not specifically consider civilizations, but he carefully assesses the ability of religious, ethnic, and linguistic similarity to reduce the frequency of interstate wars in the 1950–89 period. He finds that religious similarity does

contribute to peaceful relations and, conversely, differences in religion increase the incidence of war. But he also reports that ethnic and linguistic similarity *increase* the likelihood of war between states – just the opposite of what a cultural or civilizational perspective predicts. Indeed, the harmful effects of ethnic and linguistic similarity roughly counterbalance the peace-promoting effects of a common religion. Even the pacific benefit of a common religion is far less powerful than the effect derived from both countries sharing a democratic form of government.

Henderson also reports that geographical proximity has a greater impact on the likelihood of conflict than do any of his cultural measures. Indeed, the tendency of countries, like individuals, to fight their neighbors is probably the strongest, most consistent result in international relations research.<sup>8</sup> This is hardly surprising: neighboring countries potentially have many reasons to fight (e.g. irredentism, border disputes, access to natural resources), and the ability to strike each other with military force (even small and poor states can attack their immediate neighbors). For these reasons, it is crucial to consider the role of proximity in evaluating Huntington's thesis. Many of the conflicts he identifies at the fault lines of civilizations are those between neighboring states where conflict would be expected whether or not there were civilizational or cultural differences.

We focus here on interstate conflict, but Gurr (1994) has employed systematic analyses to assess the validity of Huntington's perspective for explaining violence within states. Are conflicts between people from different civilizations common, or becoming so? Gurr's answer is 'no'. Of the 50 most serious ethnopolitical conflicts being fought in

<sup>8</sup> Evidence for this proposition goes back at least to the work of Richardson (1960). More recent work includes Siverson & Starr (1991), Goertz & Diehl (1992), and Kocs (1995).

1993–94, only 18 fell across Huntington's civilizational divides.<sup>9</sup> In the Middle East, for example, only one active internal conflict (Palestinians in the Occupied Territories) was waged between peoples from different civilizations, while five (two in Iraq, and one each in Iran, Morocco, and Turkey) were within a single civilization. The proportions of internal conflicts involving groups from different civilizations are virtually identical before and after the Cold War. Moreover, while internal conflicts involving civilizational differences were typically more severe during the Cold War compared to those that did not, this was not true of conflicts that began in 1988 or later (Gurr, 1993).

Gurr's (2000) most recent data show that what many imagine to be a recent increase in ethno-national wars worldwide actually began in the 1960s – and dropped precipitously in the mid-1990s from its peak a few years earlier. Cultural conflicts also became less intense, and most were 'fratricidal' rather than occurring across civilizations. Violent intrastate nationalist conflicts did not become more intense or inflict more casualties from 1989 to 1996 than before, and while 17 new conflicts began during that period, 21 conflicts ended. Most ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity is not destabilizing. Only a small fraction of potential ethnic conflicts escalate into violence, even in Africa and the former Soviet Union. Nor are they less likely than other kinds of conflicts to end with a negotiated settlement. In sum, Gurr's analyses and many others raise serious doubts about the validity of cultural and civilizational explanations of conflict within states, though research on this important topic continues.<sup>10</sup>

The clash of civilizations paradigm is a big

<sup>9</sup> Huntington (pp. 256–257) cites Gurr's evidence that conflicts between Muslims and non-Muslims were common and intense, but he misreads the table in Gurr's appendix as listing 30 intercivilizational conflicts (C:C and C:I:s) rather than 18 (or 19 with one recoding by Huntington). He does not discuss Gurr's other findings.

idea, with immense implications for policy. Similar to other big ideas, it has the potential to become not just an analytical interpretation of events, but – if widely believed – a shaper of events. If that characterization is mistaken, it will misguide us. After a century vivid with the consequences of ethnic and racial hatred, and now deep into an era of weapons of mass destruction, 'Nothing would be more dangerous for the nations of the West and East than to prepare for a supposed confrontation between Christianity and Islam' (Herzog, 1999: 12; see also Holmes, 1997 and Walt, 1997). The worst outcome would be for 'clash' to become a self-fulfilling prophecy, intensifying conflicts or bringing about some that otherwise would not have occurred. In the best case, it could be a self-defeating prophecy, providing early warning to policymakers who could take steps to defuse the danger it anticipates. That is probably what Huntington intended. In any case, it is essential to assess the empirical validity of this idea. It deserves close scrutiny by the best scientific methods available.<sup>11</sup>

We assess the effect of civilizations on interstate conflict using a variety of tests. First, we evaluate Huntington's thesis controlling only for geographical contiguity, thus testing his theory in isolation from other perspectives. We ask whether a difference in civilizations increases the likelihood that a pair of states will become involved in a militarized interstate dispute. Second, we add other key influences from the realist

<sup>10</sup> Other research summarized in this paragraph is by Sadowski (1998), Ayres (2000), Wallensteen & Sollenberg (1999), Lian & O'Neal (1997), Fearon & Laitin (1996), and Licklider (1998). There is evidence that ethnic differences contribute to intrastate conflict (Auvinen, 1997; Ellingsen, 2000), but there is little to show that this increased as the Cold War declined or that 'civilizations' are the relevant cultural unit of analysis.

<sup>11</sup> Huntington differentiates (p. 13) his 'framework' for 'interpretation' from 'a work of social science'. Yet his goals (p. 30), notably to 'order and generalize about reality' and to 'understand causal relationships among phenomena', are surely grounds for employing social scientific methods.



tradition: the bilateral balance of power and whether the states are allied. This analysis tells us if the clash of civilizations hypothesis contributes to predicting the frequency of militarized conflict beyond what realist theory can do. Third, we add variables from the liberal tradition: shared democracy and economic interdependence. Previous research has shown that these influences have substantial power, like the realist variables, to explain patterns of international conflict. Thus we confront Huntington's account of interstate relations with prominent alternatives, asking if it can explain any additional phenomena not already covered by the realist and liberal theoretical traditions. Is the clash of civilizations distinguishable from the account of international politics they offer?<sup>12</sup>

We conduct several other tests of Huntington's thesis as well. We estimate the peacefulness of pairs of states within each of the eight civilizations relative to one another and to pairs of states split across civilizational lines, controlling for the realist and liberal influences. If Huntington is right, dyads within each of the civilizations will be more peaceful than pairs of states split across a civilizational boundary. Then we evaluate the 'west versus the rest' hypothesis. We identify pairs of states composed of one Western state and one from any other civilization and estimate the probability of conflict for these dyads relative to all other pairs. Similarly, we test whether there is particular animosity

<sup>12</sup> Huntington also compares his paradigm with alternatives (notably on pp. 31–35). The '184 States, More or Less' and 'Sheer Chaos' alternatives focus on the realist state-centric system of power and alliances. 'Open World: Euphoria and Harmony' and 'Two Worlds: Us and Them' represent versions of liberal arguments about the role of democracy and differences in economic development. His critique of the democratic peace concentrates on the widespread absence of democracy. He does note that shared democratic institutions, where they exist, diminish conflict. On p. 67, he rejects the idea that trade reduces interstate disputes. Our purpose is to confront directly Huntington's hypothesis of civilization-based interstate violence with specific hypotheses central to these other paradigms.

between the West and Islam or between the West and the Sinic civilization. Next we determine whether civilizations with a large 'core state' (or hegemon) benefit from more peaceful relations and whether democratically organized hegemonies are particularly peaceful.

We test these hypotheses regarding the clash of civilizations with data from the 1950–92 period. This is appropriate because Huntington addressed events in these years when he first presented his argument in 1993.<sup>13</sup> He makes clear there that he does not believe the effects of civilizational differences are limited to the post–Cold War era, though he does argue that they have recently gained added importance. Of course, if the clash thesis is simply a prophecy about what may happen in the 21st century, that would immunize it to any current empirical test. But we can determine now whether there is any indication of an increase in cross-civilizational disputes as the Cold War waned, or as radical Islamic forces gained control in some countries. First, we determine if the incidence of conflict between civilizations increased over the period of our analysis, and then whether it has been greater since the Iranian revolution, or since the end of the Cold War in 1989. We also control explicitly for the intensity of the confrontation between East and West using US defense expenditures as a percentage of its GDP.

<sup>13</sup> We did check, here and in Russett & Oneal (2001), whether Huntington's thesis was validated when tested over the long period 1885–1992. It was not. Henderson & Tucker (1999) concur. Analyses similar to those here, with a slightly different specification (distance, whether the dyad contains a major power, and joint IGO memberships added; DEM<sub>H</sub> dropped) and applied only to politically relevant dyads (dyads that are contiguous and/or contain a major power) appear in Russett & Oneal (2001: ch. 7). The results are not materially different for Huntington's theory. Including distance, however, does raise the significance of our measure of economic interdependence, for the reasons we have discussed elsewhere (Oneal & Russett, 1999a): DEP<sub>L</sub> becomes significant at the .001 level in the model in column 4, Table 1; it is also significant ( $p < 0.03$ ) when the peacefulness of the individual civilizations is estimated (Table 2).

Finally, we consider the possibility that, if civilizational differences do not have a significant direct effect on conflict, they may have powerful indirect influences through important realist and liberal variables. If civilizational identities substantially predict which states become allied, have high levels of trade, and govern themselves similarly, then it could be argued that civilizations are the prime movers behind these political and economic factors and account for their influence on international conflict. But if civilizational identities do not predict alliances, trade, or political systems well, this argument fails.

### Our Method of Analysis

To test these propositions about the involvement of states in militarized interstate disputes, we consider all pairs of states (or dyads) in the international system for which data are available, observed annually from 1950 through 1992; unfortunately, systematic data regarding interstate disputes do not exist for more recent years. The focus on dyads is appropriate for a theory, such as Huntington's, that posits that the probability of interstate conflict varies with states' military, political, or cultural characteristics.<sup>14</sup> We use the Correlates of War (COW) data on militarized interstate disputes. We identify each year that one or both states in a dyad threatened to use force, made a demonstration of force, or actually used military force against the other. The variable DISPUTE equals 1 in these cases, and 0 otherwise.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> For fuller discussion of our methods and data, see Oneal & Russett (1999b) and Russett & Oneal (2001).

<sup>15</sup> An alternative would be to count only the initial year or onset of a dispute. As explained below, however, we believe that counting every year of multi-year disputes as an instance of conflict is correct for addressing Huntington's position. Empirically, analyses with all years or just the first year of a dispute give very similar results, both here and elsewhere. For extensive tests of robustness, see Oneal & Russett (1999a) and Bennett & Stam (2000).

Our analysis is useful for identifying influences on the frequency of conflict. Huntington, however, is concerned not only with frequency, but also with the 'most pervasive, important, and dangerous conflicts' and with those that are geographically extensive: 'Violence between states and groups from different civilizations . . . carries with it the potential for escalation as other states and groups from these civilizations rally to the support of their "kin countries" (p. 28). Fault line wars (p. 253) are 'protracted conflicts'. It is not clear how pervasiveness, importance, and danger are to be assessed. Since Huntington did not subject his theory to systematic empirical testing, it is not always precisely specified. With the dyad as unit of analysis, however, we give due weight to broad, laterally expanding conflicts. A conflict limited to a single dyad counts once; a conflict with three states on either side counts nine times. By considering each year of a temporally extended dispute or sequence of disputes, we give added weight to these protracted conflicts, which are often particularly serious. In addition, we note below the results of analyses limited to disputes that involved an actual use of force or fatalities.

Our first test of Huntington's thesis includes only two independent variables. One, which we label SPLIT, indicates whether a dyad is culturally heterogeneous or not. It is coded 1 if the states belong to different civilizations, and 0 if they are from the same one. In making this determination, we considered the eight civilizations noted above: the Western, Sinic, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, Buddhist, and African. Testing Huntington's theory requires, therefore, that one classify each state according to the civilization of which it is a member. For this, we relied primarily on the map that appears in *The Clash of Civilizations* (pp. 26–27). Three 'lone states' are not identified with any civilizations. Identifying the civilization of a country is not always easy,

however; and the criteria underlying the classificatory scheme are somewhat unclear. In most cases, religion seems to be the primary criterion, but geographical location plays a major part in defining a few civilizations, notably Africa and Latin America. Many countries do not fit comfortably in a single group and are considered 'cleft' or 'torn'.<sup>16</sup>

As noted earlier, it is essential to control for geographical proximity when testing any theory of interstate conflict. In a sense, this is the most fundamental of realist variables because the potential for interstate violence exists only when at least one member of a dyad can reach the other with military force. To measure proximity, we include the variable CONTIG, which equals 1 if the two states are directly or indirectly contiguous (including via colonies or other dependencies), either sharing a land boundary or

separated by less than 150 miles of water; and 0 if the members of a dyad are not contiguous.

Another constraint on the use of military force emphasized by realists is relative power, specifically the balance of power within a dyad. The idea that an equal balance of military capabilities deters conflict has deep roots, as does the idea that a preponderance of power, by reducing uncertainty as to which side would win a contest of arms, is more likely to preserve the peace. Recent work suggests that it is preponderance that deters military action (Kugler & Lemke, 1996).<sup>17</sup> To assess the effect of states' military capabilities on the likelihood of conflict, we use the natural logarithm of the ratio of the stronger state's military capability index to that of the weaker member in each dyad. This measure (CAPRATIO) is calculated using the COW

<sup>16</sup> All our civilization codings appear in the Appendix. We relied primarily on the map in Huntington's book, but consulted his text to clarify difficult choices. The coding of ambiguous cases affects only a small fraction of the cases we analyze, so it has little influence on our results. Henderson & Tucker (1999) make independent and somewhat different coding decisions, but reach conclusions that are consistent with ours.

The Buddhist civilization was not in Huntington's initial article (1993a), and in the book (e.g. p. 48) he says that Buddhism is 'not the basis of a major civilization'; nevertheless, the map identifies Buddhist as one of the eight civilizations. The three 'lone' states are Japan, Ethiopia ('culturally isolated', p. 136), and Haiti ('truly a kinless country', p. 137). Japan is identifiably separate on Huntington's map; Ethiopia and Haiti are not, but we regard the text as more accurately reflecting Huntington's intentions. The map suggests that all the former British Caribbean states are Latin American, but that is inconsistent with his text (p. 131): 'The single civilization Caribbean Community (CARICOM) . . . has created an extensive variety of cooperative arrangements, with more intensive cooperation among some subgroupings. Efforts to create broader Caribbean organizations bridging the Anglo-Hispanic fault line in the Caribbean have, however, consistently failed.' This is the only point at which he refers to any multi-state civilizations that are not identified as such on his map. Considering their parliamentary political systems and predominantly Protestant Christian religious identity, we choose to code most of these island states as part of the Western civilization.

Four countries are 'torn', home to two or more civilizations in which leaders of one predominant culture want to shift to another (pp. 139–154): Russia (Orthodox to Western), Mexico (Latin to Western), Turkey (Islamic to

Western), and Australia (Western to Asian). On the map, however, all are unambiguously identified with the first civilization listed; we classified them accordingly. The civilizations of several states in Africa cannot definitively be determined from the map, nor are they clearly apportioned in the text. When in doubt, we consulted CIA (1994) on religious composition and assigned those with greater than 50% Muslim population to the Islamic group and the rest to the African group. Accordingly, we assigned Nigeria to the African civilization, though it is identified as a 'cleft country' in the text and is split on the map. India is another divided, cleft country; but surely it must be identified with the Hindu civilization. Sri Lanka is unclear on the map and sometimes in the text; but Huntington identifies it as Buddhist on p. 48, consistent with the CIA's estimate that the country is 69% Buddhist. On the basis of its largest religious group (41%) we assigned the former Yugoslavia to the Orthodox civilization. The Philippines is also cleft in the text and the map, but on the basis of its 92% Christian population we assigned it to the West. South Africa is difficult, and Huntington's discussion in the text is ambiguous; we followed the map and considered it as African.

The most curious case is Israel. In the text Huntington is sometimes ambivalent (p. 48), often (pp. 90, 156, 186) labels it non-Western, and on p. 188 calls it a civilization of 'Zionism and politicized Judaism'. On the map, it appears to be part of Islam. In the light of its history as a stable parliamentary democracy and the predominance of Jewish immigration from Europe and America (Eisenstadt, 1985: 296), we coded it as Western. Since the vast majority of Israel's disputes have been with Islamic states, that coding increases the evidence in favor of Huntington's hypothesis.  
<sup>17</sup> Waltz (1979: 117–123) reviews the literature regarding the balance of power and states his own version of the theory.

project's data on population, industry, and military preparedness (Singer & Small, 1995).

The final realist variable we use in the analyses below reflects the widespread expectation that allies will fight less with each other than with other states, because by forming an alliance they have indicated that they share concerns regarding their security. Allied states often have other political and economic interests in common as well. We control for this influence using a variable (ALLY) that equals 1 if the members of a dyad were linked by a mutual defense treaty, a neutrality pact, or an entente, or 0 otherwise.<sup>18</sup>

The liberal variables, too, are familiar. The first is democracy, for which we use the Polity III data (Jaggers & Gurr, 1995) to compute a summary measure of the political character of regimes, subtracting every country's score on the autocracy scale from its score on the democracy scale. The resulting variable ranges from -10 for an extreme autocracy to +10 for the most democratic states. Because a dispute can result from the actions of a single state, the likelihood of conflict is primarily a function of the degree of constraint experienced by the less constrained state in each dyad. That state is the weak link in the chain of peaceful relations (Dixon, 1994). We expect, therefore, that the less democratic state ( $DEM_L$ ) in a dyad most strongly influences the danger of interstate violence: the more democratic that state, the more constrained from engaging in a dispute it will be. In some previous analyses of the post-World War II period, we also found that the *difference* between states' political regimes also affects the likelihood of conflict.<sup>19</sup> To capture this effect, we add a second measure ( $DEM_H$ ) for the score of the more democratic state. When

$DEM_L$  is held constant, a higher value of  $DEM_H$  indicates greater political distance between the two states;  $DEM_H$  should, therefore, be positively correlated with conflict in our analyses.

Measurement of the other liberal influence, interdependence, is straightforward. We use the IMF statistics on bilateral trade. Since trade is expected to influence dyadic relations only when it is economically important, we divide the sum of a country's exports and imports with its dyadic partner by its GDP.<sup>20</sup> As with the influence of democratic institutions, we expect the likelihood of a dispute to be primarily influenced by the freedom of action available to the state less constrained from using force. This is the state with the lower bilateral trade-to-GDP ratio ( $DEPEND_L$ ), because it is less dependent economically on trade with the other member of the dyad.

It is important to ensure that the factors used to explain a dispute are not themselves influenced by that conflict. For example, peace may promote trade in addition to trade constraining conflict. Some variables, such as contiguity, are probably exogenous but, to be consistent, we lag all the independent variables by one year. Thus we explain the onset of a dispute in a year by reference to conditions in the previous year. We make appropriate statistical corrections for analyzing cross-sectional time-series data.<sup>21</sup>

We estimate the influence of civilizational differences and the realist and liberal variables on the likelihood of conflict using logistic regression analysis. This enables us to estimate the independent effect of each factor while holding all others constant. In essence,

<sup>18</sup> We updated Singer (1995) from Rengger & Campbell (1995).

<sup>19</sup> This was not true before World War II. See Oneal & Russett (1997, 1999b).

<sup>20</sup> Trade data are from IMF (1993); GDPs are from Summers et al. (1995). For dyads in which one or both states was an IMF member, we assumed that missing data indicated zero trade, rather than drop them from the analysis (Oneal & Russett, 1999a). Missing data for trade involving only non-members of the IMF – within the communist bloc, for example – are treated as missing, so those dyads are not included in our analyses.

Table I. Tests of Hypotheses from *Clash of Civilizations*, Realist, and Liberal Theories Regarding Militarized Disputes, 1950–92

<i>Variable</i>	1	2	3	4
SPLIT	0.20 (0.16)	0.05 (0.17)	-0.04 (0.17)	-0.26 (0.19)
CONTIG	3.52 (0.16)***	3.62 (0.17)***	3.55 (0.18)***	3.71 (0.20)***
ALLY		-0.57 (0.17)***		-0.72 (0.21)***
CAPRATIO		-0.10 (0.04)**		-0.06 (0.05)
DEM <sub>L</sub>			-0.07 (0.01)***	-0.07 (0.01)***
DEM <sub>H</sub>			0.02 (0.01)**	0.02 (0.01)*
DEPEND <sub>L</sub>			-20.55 (13.70)	-25.89 (15.95)*
Constant	-6.01 (0.16)***	-5.63 (0.17)***	-6.22 (0.18)***	-5.84 (0.20)***
<i>N</i>	363,258	362,558	269,674	269,181

\* $p \leq 0.05$ , \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq 0.001$ ; one-tailed tests.

we assess the relative contributions of various influences on the risk of conflict in the same manner as medical researchers, using large databases on the experience of many patients, estimate the independent impact of hereditary, environmental, or lifestyle factors on the risk of disease.

### Basic Tests of Civilizational, Realist, and Liberal Influences

Our first analysis is the simplest: The likelihood of a dispute is a function of civilizational

differences (SPLIT) and contiguity (CONTIG). The results of estimating this regression equation are shown in Table I. For each variable the first entry in the column is the estimated coefficient; the standard error of the coefficient is given in parentheses. The coefficients of the variables, and hence their substantive importance, cannot be readily compared in most cases because the variables are measured in different units. The statistical significance of a variable is derived from the ratio of its coefficient to its standard error: the higher the ratio the more significant is the variable's effect. All the significance tests indicated in the table are one-tailed, since each hypothesis clearly specifies an expected sign, positive or negative, for the coefficient.

As shown in the first column of Table I, contiguity has a very significant influence on the likelihood of a dyadic dispute. SPLIT is statistically significant at the 0.10 level, but geographical proximity is much more important substantively. Because both SPLIT and CONTIG are indicator variables that take a value of 0 or 1, the coefficients can be directly compared: contiguity is 17 times more influential than a civilizational difference.

In column 2 we add the two realist variables to our model of interstate conflict. Both alliances ( $p < 0.001$ ) and capability ratio – the

<sup>21</sup> We estimated the coefficients in our regression equations using the General Estimating Equation (GEE) method of Diggle et al. (1994), using the computing algorithms of Stata 5.0 (StataCorp, 1997). We adjust for first-order autoregression (AR1) and estimate statistical significance using robust standard errors that take into account the clustering of our data by dyads. Thus we respond to the issues raised by Beck et al. (1998). We rely on GEE rather than their recommended solution for temporal dependence because of doubts about its appropriateness (Oneal & Russett, 1999a). We did, however, re-estimate key analyses reported below and found that our conclusions regarding civilizational differences were unaffected. Green et al. (2001) recently raised questions about pooled time-series analyses and prefer estimating equations that include fixed effects. Coefficients estimated in this way are effectively based only on cross-temporal variation. In periods of only a few decades, with a dichotomous dependent variable for a relatively rare event – such as militarized disputes – fixed-effects estimations are problematic (Beck & Katz, 2001; Oneal & Russett, 2001). In any case, a fixed-effects model cannot estimate the influence of a variable – such as civilization – that is invariant through time.

bilateral balance of power ( $p < 0.01$ ) – have significant effects on the likelihood of a militarized dispute. Allies are less likely to fight, and a preponderance of power inhibits conflict. States split across civilizations, however, are not more prone to conflict in this specification: The coefficient of SPLIT is just over a quarter of its value in column 1 and is far from statistical significance ( $p < 0.38$ ).

Next, we add the liberal variables to the simplest specification in order to evaluate the clash of civilizations in competition with the liberal perspective. Column 3 reports these results. Contrary to expectations, the coefficient of SPLIT is now negative, though it is far from being statistically significant. Democracy and economically important trade are, however, related to the incidence of disputes.  $DEM_L$  is significant at the 0.001 level,  $DEM_H$  at 0.01, and  $DEPEND_L$  at 0.07. The signs and absolute values of the coefficients of the two measures of political regimes indicate that two democracies are the most peaceful type of dyad, two autocracies are less so, and democracies and autocracies were particularly prone to fight in the post-World War II era.<sup>22</sup> Economic interdependence also inhibits conflict modestly in this specification. We found that SPLIT was not statistically significant when either the two democracy measures or the measure of economic interdependence alone was entered in an equation with contiguity; these results are not shown in the table.<sup>23</sup> Controlling for either

the character of political regimes or the economic importance of trade or both, there is no evidence, then, that civilizational differences contribute to explaining the propensity of dyads to engage in militarized disputes.

Finally, column 4 shows the independent effect of civilizational differences in the presence of all the realist and liberal influences. Contiguity, allies, and the lower democracy score are highly significant; the higher democracy score ( $p < 0.04$ ) and economic interdependence ( $p < 0.05$ ) are moderately so. The effect of the capability ratio is much weakened. The indicator for dyads split across civilizational boundaries is insignificant; indeed the coefficient is again negative, and now larger than its standard error. To test the hypothesis that the effect of being split is different for contiguous dyads, those pairs of states that are particularly prone to conflict and might be more subject to this influence, we added an interactive term,  $SPLIT*CONTIG$ , to the equation represented in column 4. We found no evidence that states split across civilizational boundaries, whether contiguous or not, are more likely to become involved in a dispute, *ceteris paribus*.

Taken together, the results in Table I indicate that civilizational differences have no significant effect on the probability that a dyad will become involved in conflict once either realist or liberal theories are taken into account. Additional tests, not reported in the table, also showed that dyads split across civilizations' boundaries are not more prone to become involved in serious conflicts, those involving actual uses of military force or fatalities.<sup>24</sup> Realism and liberalism, even in the simple versions employed here, provide more substantial, albeit still

<sup>22</sup> These findings are consistent with other results we have reported (Oneal & Russett, 1997); but in our most recent analyses for the years 1885–1992, we find no statistically significant difference between the incidence of conflict for two autocracies and for mixed pairs of states.

<sup>23</sup> When only  $DEM_L$  and  $DEM_H$  are included in the equation, both are highly significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) but SPLIT is not ( $p < 0.47$ ). With just  $DEP_L$  ( $p < 0.01$ ), SPLIT again is insignificant ( $p < 0.33$ ). When the liberal variables, especially  $DEP_L$ , are included in the equation, there is a loss of a large number of cases because of missing data. To ensure this was not biasing our results, we re-estimated the simplest specification (column 1, Table 1) with just the observations for which we have data regarding trade and democracy. The results were similar to what is reported in the first column of Table I.

<sup>24</sup> Huntington's thesis did somewhat worse with the alternative dependent variables, in that the coefficient of SPLIT was still negative and more nearly significant. Being SPLIT makes a fatal dispute *less likely* with confidence of 0.06 (one-tailed) *ceteris paribus*.

incomplete, explanations for international conflict.

### What Are the Patterns of Conflict Within and Between Particular Civilizations?

Huntington argues that conflict is more likely between states from different civilizations than it is for states from the same cultural group. An alternative test of this theory is to compare the incidence of interstate disputes within the particular civilizations to the rate of conflict among dyads that are split across civilizational lines. To do this, we created a dummy variable for each of the eight civilizations and added these eight indicators to the control variables employed in the test reported in the last column of Table I. The coefficient of each dummy indicates the peacefulness of dyads within that civilization relative to the residual set of dyads, pairs of states that are split between two civilizations. If Huntington is correct, these variables would have negative signs. The magnitude of their coefficients also allows us to compare the peacefulness of the eight civilizations one to another: the most peaceful civilization would have the most negative coefficient.

Table II shows these results. There is little evidence that civilizations clash. First, note that the various control variables perform about as they did in column 4 of Table I. Contiguity and both democracy measures are again highly significant and have the anticipated effects. Alliances ( $p < 0.03$ ) also perform as expected. Economic interdependence and the capability ratio are insignificant. But only one of the coefficients for the dummy variables is negative and statistically significant: there is less conflict within the West ( $p < 0.001$ ) than among dyads split across civilizational lines. The West is by far the most internally peaceful civilization, reflecting the regularization of peaceful relations among the industrialized democracies since the

blood-letting of World War II and the unity inspired by the Cold War. The internal peacefulness of the West does not mean that it is especially dispute-prone toward other civilizations, however. We shall see below that it is not. The signs for the Hindu, Orthodox, and Latin civilizations also indicate slightly less conflict within their boundaries, but for none of them is the effect significant ( $p < 0.16$ ,  $0.26$ , and  $0.23$ ). The other four civilizations exhibited *greater* frequencies of conflict among their members, 1950–92, than did dyads split across civilizations; and for the Sinic and Buddhist groups this effect is statistically significant. Huntington characterizes the Islamic civilization as being in conflict with ‘its Orthodox, Hindu, African, and Western Christian neighbors’ (p. 183) – a region with ‘bloody borders’ (p. 244). If so, it is also bloody internally. Pairs of Islamic states were somewhat more dispute-prone than were split dyads as a group, though this difference is not statistically significant ( $p < 0.12$ ).

On balance, the evidence from the test

Table II. Tests of Hypotheses Regarding Frequency of Militarized Disputes Within Civilizations, 1950–92

Variable	
CONTIG	3.62 (0.19)***
ALLY	-0.39 (0.21)*
CAPRATIO	-0.06 (0.05)
DEM <sub>L</sub>	-0.05 (0.01)***
DEM <sub>H</sub>	0.03 (0.01)***
DEPEND <sub>L</sub>	-3.33 (6.71)
WESTERN	-1.08 (0.31)***
SINIC	2.83 (0.34)***
ISLAMIC	0.26 (0.22)
HINDU	-0.56 (0.54)
ORTHODOX	-0.38 (0.58)
LATIN	-0.28 (0.38)
AFRICAN	0.12 (0.26)
BUDDHIST	1.64 (0.43)***
Constant	-6.06 (0.15)***
N	269,181

\* $p \leq 0.05$ , \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq 0.001$ ; one-tailed tests.

Table III. The West Versus Others

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
WEST versus REST	0.25 (0.16)				
WEST versus ISLAM		0.15 (0.25)	-0.39 (0.27)		
ISRAEL versus ISLAM			2.27 (0.46)***		
WEST versus ORTH.				1.12 (0.38)**	
WEST versus SINIC					2.12 (0.36)***
CONTIG	3.78 (0.19)***	3.77 (0.19)***	3.68 (0.19)***	3.76 (0.19)***	3.88 (0.20)***
ALLY	-0.57 (0.20)**	-0.60 (0.19)***	-0.56 (0.19)**	-0.62 (0.19)***	-0.57 (0.20)**
CAPRATIO	-0.07 (0.05)	-0.06 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.07 (0.05)	-0.05 (0.05)
DEM <sub>L</sub>	-0.07 (0.01)***	-0.06 (0.01)***	-0.07 (0.01)***	-0.07 (0.01)***	-0.06 (0.01)***
DEM <sub>H</sub>	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
DEPEND <sub>L</sub>	-21.85 (14.79)	-22.81 (14.62)	-16.85 (12.01)	-27.84 (17.56)	-24.19 (15.61)
Constant	-6.12 (0.16)***	-6.05 (0.14)***	-6.07 (0.15)***	-6.07 (0.15)***	-6.21 (0.16)***
N	269,120	269,120	269,120	269,181	269,120

\* $p \leq 0.05$ , \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq 0.001$ ; one-tailed tests.

reported in Table II not only fails to support Huntington's hypothesis but leans in the opposite direction.<sup>25</sup> The spread of results – one civilization where interstate relations are significantly less conflictual than among the split dyads, three others that are only slightly more peaceful internally, two that are insignificantly less peaceful, and two significantly less peaceful than the split pairs – is what one would expect if there were no relation between civilizations and interstate conflict. These dramatic differences among the eight groups explain why SPLIT was insignificant in Table I.

What about the contention that the sharpest and most dangerous division is between the 'West and the rest'? The results of our test of this proposition are shown in column 1 of Table III. There is slight support for Huntington's hypothesis. The coefficient for the variable that identifies dyads which

contain one Western state and one state from any other civilization is positive and not far from statistical significance ( $p < 0.07$ ), but it is instructive to break down this general 'West versus rest' distinction into its most salient parts.

We begin this process in the second column, using an indicator variable to assess the incidence of violence between the West and Islam. Those results indicate that Western and Islamic dyads are slightly more likely to fight than other pairs of states, all other things being equal; but the coefficient is statistically insignificant ( $p < 0.28$ ). With a closer look, even this effect fades. Although we have identified Israel as part of the West, Huntington did not. Accordingly, in column 3 of Table III, we report a second test of the propensity of the West and Islam to fight, in which we control for the conflict between Israel and the Islamic, primarily Arab, states. The coefficient for the indicator of the incidence of conflict for the remaining West versus Islam dyads is now *negative* and almost significant ( $p < 0.08$ ), while the Israel versus Islam variable is strongly positive. The substance of the purported clash between the West and Islam is simply the familiar Arab–Israeli conflict.

<sup>25</sup> Recall that trade between non-IMF members is missing, which might have affected these results. To check, we reran the equation without DEP<sub>L</sub>. This increased the sample by over 20,000 dyads, but the substantive effect was minimal. The negative coefficients for the Orthodox and Hindu civilizations became marginally significant ( $p < 0.05$  and 0.10, respectively), but the positive coefficient for the Islamic civilization also became stronger ( $p < 0.05$ ).



We did find two groups with which the West experienced more conflict. Column 4 shows that there was substantially greater conflict between the Western group and Eastern Christianity, 1950–92; and column 5 shows a higher level of interstate violence between the Western and Sinic groups. This is the essence of the ‘West versus the rest’ hypothesis. But rather than link either of these results with civilizational differences, it is more plausible to interpret them simply as evidence of Cold War conflicts across the old iron curtain in Europe and the bamboo curtain in Asia.

### **Does a Strong Core State Reduce the Likelihood of Conflict?**

Can a strong core state, or hegemon, keep peace within its own civilization? Some civilizations do have powerful cores – single states with the vast majority of economic strength and military capabilities. These include India with approximately 99% of the militarily relevant resources of the tiny Hindu group, the Soviet Union with 86–90% of the Orthodox group’s capabilities during the Cold War years, and China, which usually held 70% or more of the Sinic group’s capabilities in the period of our analyses. In the middle is the West, for which the USA represents the core in economic and military capacity, with approximately 43% of all Western capabilities.

The other four groups have not had strong cores. Thailand is the strongest member of the rather small Buddhist group, with capabilities mostly in the range of 40–65% of the group’s capability. But Thailand is not a strong state, and it is geographically situated at the intersection of two much more powerful civilizational hegemonies, those of China and India. The Thais quite literally are in no position to act hegemonic. Brazil is by far the strongest power in Latin America, but its relatively limited capabilities (usually about

30% of the group’s total) correspond to Huntington’s view that the region lacks a strong core. Latin America, of course, is also influenced by the USA. He also characterizes the African and Islamic groups as lacking a core. Our simple measure of hegemony – the capabilities held by the largest state in each civilization – is consistent with this view.

South Africa held more than 85% of the capabilities of independent African states during the 1950s but, with the decolonization of Africa, this dropped quickly to approximately 40%. During the apartheid years, South Africa tried rather unsuccessfully to be a hegemon and impose peace in its part of the continent. In any event, with its internal cultural divisions, South Africa was hardly in a position to lead the African civilization. In most years, Turkey was the strongest Islamic country, with approximately 20% of that group’s capabilities, though occasionally Egypt or Iran slipped ahead. Again, other factors reduce even this nominal indicator of power: Turkey is a ‘torn’ country divided between the West and Islam. Consequently, measuring the share of the civilization’s militarily relevant capabilities held by South Africa or Turkey probably exaggerates their strength as cores, but they are already toward the low end of the scale. The share of capabilities held by the largest state in each civilization seems to be a reasonably valid gauge of the strength of the civilizations’ cores.

We assessed the ability of a strong core state to pacify interstate relations within a civilization by creating an interactive term for each civilization and the leading state’s share of that civilization’s total capabilities and adding those terms to a simple version of the equation in Table II, with the eight dummy variables for each civilization and the measure of contiguity. If the relative strength of the core state in each civilization matters, the interactive terms should increase the explanatory power of the simple model. But only for the extreme case, the

small Indian-dominated Hindu group, did that happen. Otherwise, the strength of the hegemon tells us nothing new.

A related hypothesis is that a democratic core state, acting as a benign hegemon, can pacify relationships within its civilization. Looking back at Table II, of the four civilizations that might be characterized as regional hegemonies, USA's leadership of NATO during the Cold War, in which it relied to a reasonable degree on persuasion and consensus-building, seems to fit, and to account in part for the remarkably peaceful relations within the West. No other civilization was significantly peaceful internally, so it is hard to find any pacifying influence of hegemony, democratic or otherwise. Two civilizations were significantly less peaceful than others, however. Of these, the Buddhist has no core; the Sinic, of course, does, but China is no democracy. Two of the eight civilizations (the West and the Sinic) may be said to fit Kupchan's hypothesis about democratic versus authoritarian hegemonies, but that is not a strong basis on which to generalize.

### Does the Clash of Civilizations Intensify Over Time?

As noted earlier, Huntington's thesis is meant to apply more to the recent period than to the more distant past.<sup>26</sup> In fact, he suggests that the Cold War suppressed civilizational conflicts. The East–West rivalry was so important and widespread that other divisions were forced into the background. It is possible, therefore, that our analyses of the full 1950–92 period are distorted by the effects of the Cold War and do not represent the pattern of conflict that should be expected as the Cold War faded. To assess this possibility,

<sup>26</sup> Huntington says that while a civilizational approach may help us to understand global politics in the late 20th century, that does not mean it would have been equally helpful in the mid-20th century (p. 14). This does not identify a breakpoint or period of transition, however.

we conducted four tests, each designed in a different way to reveal whether the effect of civilizational differences on the likelihood of dyadic conflict increased as the Cold War waned. We do not present these analyses here, but the results are easily summarized.

In our first effort, we created a variable that simply marked the passage of time from 1950. The variable TIME equaled the year of an observation minus 1949. In effect, we assumed that the intensity of the Cold War declined steadily from 1950 through 1992. We then formed an interactive term using this variable and SPLIT and added both to the equation in column 4 of Table I. Thus the regression equation included SPLIT, TIME\*SPLIT, TIME, and the realist and liberal control variables. The sign of the coefficient of the interactive term was negative and significant ( $p < 0.004$ ). This indicates, surprisingly, that the influence of SPLIT *declined* – not grew – as time passed.

Next we used the same basic technique but with a better measure of the intensity of the Cold War. We know that the Cold War did not decline steadily from year to year. The end of the Korean war and the death of Stalin in 1953 had big effects, for example, while in other years there was little change in the status quo. In still others, notably with the escalation of the USA's involvement in Indochina in the late 1960s and during the Reagan Administration's confrontation of the 'evil empire', the East–West confrontation intensified. A good measure of the intensity of the Cold War is the defense burden of the USA. This is its military expenditures divided by its gross domestic product in each year (Oneal & Whatley, 1996; Oneal & Russett, 1999b). When the USA devoted more of its resources to defense, it was an indication that it felt more insecure, that the level of international tensions and the risk of war had increased. During the Cold War years, the source of that insecurity was primarily the Soviet bloc. Consistent with subjective

interpretations, the trend in the defense burden was downward over time, but there were dramatic jumps as the wars in Korea and Vietnam escalated and in the 1980s. In the post-Cold War era, the US defense burden has declined precisely because these military-political tensions have diminished.

For the second test, then, we assumed that the ratio of US military expenditures to GDP is a good measure of the intensity of the Cold War; and we asked whether the impact of civilizational differences increased when the influence of the Cold War waned. We substituted the US defense burden for TIME, again created an interactive term, and added both variables to the equation in the fourth column of Table I. Again, the answer was contrary to expectations: conflicts among split dyads were less common when the Cold War diminished in intensity. The Cold War seems to have fanned cultural differences, not suppressed them.

Next we divided the period 1950–92 according to two big transitions, either of which may have demarcated the Cold War, when the East–West rivalry prevailed, from a period when the clash of civilizations was important. The first possible turning point is 1979, the year of the Iranian revolution. Huntington marks this dramatic event as the time when civilizational conflicts became more prominent. Although the Cold War was not over for perhaps another decade, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism from Afghanistan to Algeria reduced the significance of the East–West divide. We used an interactive term involving an indicator marking the years after 1978 and the variable SPLIT to determine whether the frequency of conflict for split dyads was greater after the Iranian revolution. Instead of increasing, however, the frequency of disputes across civilizational boundaries declined in later years.

Finally, we checked to see whether the dispute-inducing effect of SPLIT became stronger after the Cold War was effectively

over. We considered 1988 as the last year of the Cold War, and again we created an interactive variable with SPLIT.<sup>27</sup> Consistent with the previous three tests, the results indicated that interstate disputes between civilizations dropped after the Cold War ended. Many old conflicts across civilizational boundaries were resolved or reduced – notably in Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Cambodia, the Middle East, and Namibia – when the Cold War ended and the Superpowers no longer had an incentive to meddle in regional conflicts.

Whichever way one asks the question, the answer is the same: civilizational conflicts did not increase as the Cold War waned. Quite the opposite is true: they became more infrequent. The Cold War did not suppress regional conflicts; it exacerbated them.

### Is Civilization the Prime Mover?

Finally, could it be that civilizational differences are not direct causes of conflict, but have important indirect effects? Perhaps civilizational identity is the prime mover behind the realist and liberal influences that prove important in our analyses, explaining which states become allies, who trades with whom, and which countries have similar political systems (notably, which share democratic institutions).

To explore this possibility, we created three paired sets of equations. The first equation in each pair predicted dyads' alliances, trade, or the similarity of their political system ( $DEM_H - DEM_I$ ) by whether they were part of different civilizations (SPLIT), contiguous, and whichever of the other three variables (alliance, trade, and political system) were not being predicted in that equation. This tells us how much of the variance in alliances, trade, and political similarity can be accounted for by this bundle of variables. Then, for the

<sup>27</sup> In November 1988, British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, proclaimed, 'The Cold War is over'. Dixon & Gaarder (1992) find a clear shift in behavior in that year.

other equation in each pair, we used only SPLIT as predictor, to see how much of the variance it could account for by itself. By comparing these two measures of the variance explained, we can get an indication of the importance of civilizations in accounting for each of the predicted variables. If civilizational differences explain much of the variance in alliances, trade, and political institutions, then they might have important indirect influences on the likelihood of conflict. This test is generous to the civilization hypothesis, because SPLIT is the only variable tested alone; therefore, it receives credit for any predictive power it really shares with the other variables in the full specification.

Alliances prove easiest to predict this way. The full equation (logit for the dichotomous dependent variable) produced a pseudo- $R^2$  of 0.245, meaning all the variables together accounted for just under one-quarter of the total variance in alliances. Alliances across civilizational boundaries (SPLIT) were uncommon. The variable SPLIT was very significant statistically ( $p < 0.001$ ), and its influence on the probability that two states would be allied was greatest of any of the variables in the equation. States with different political systems were also unlikely to be allied. Contiguity, too, was an important influence, as states are more apt to ally with neighbors than with more distant states. Trade patterns had little effect. For the equation predicting alliances from SPLIT alone, the pseudo- $R^2$  was 0.182. Comparing this to the variance explained with the complete set of variables shows that civilizational identities are important in shaping states' alliance commitments, but most of the variance remains unaccounted for.

The attempt to predict the liberal variables did not fare as well. In explaining who trades with whom, the full OLS equation (for a continuous dependent variable) produced an  $R^2$  of 0.094, accounted for primarily by contiguity and states' political systems; democratic states are more likely to trade with one

another than are two autocracies or a mixed pair of states.<sup>28</sup> SPLIT was very significantly related to trade levels, but its substantive contribution was modest, as evidenced by an  $R^2$  of just 0.020 when it was entered alone. The equations predicting the similarity of states' political systems explained even less of the variance. The  $R^2$  for the equation with all the regressors was only 0.046, mostly accounted for by SPLIT ( $p < 0.001$ ) and alliances. (Since World War II, at least, democracies have tended to ally with each other, as Siverson & Emmons, 1991 and Simon & Gartzke, 1996 have shown.) With SPLIT alone as the predictor,  $R^2$  was 0.032. Civilizational differences, therefore, explain very little of the pattern of economically important commerce. Nor do they tell us much about the character of states' political systems.<sup>29</sup> All of Huntington's civilizations contain both democracies and autocracies.

In sum, civilizational borders play a substantial role in shaping the pattern of alliances, though most of the variation in formal security arrangements is unaccounted for. But they do not appear to affect trade or the degree of democracy enough to support the claim that civilizational differences and similarities are major indirect influences on the incidence of militarized disputes. Civilizations do not make the difference; the liberal and realist influences do.

## Conclusion

Huntington advanced his thesis regarding the clash of civilizations by arguing plausibly

<sup>28</sup> An effort to predict trade patterns well, rather than simply to establish a basis for judging the effect of civilization, would have included several other variables, notably distance and the sizes of the two economies, which are key to economists' gravity models. Bliss & Russett (1998) show that such an equation, with some political variables, can predict as much as three-quarters of the total variance; see also Oneal & Russett (2001).

<sup>29</sup> Earlier evidence that culture is little related to the similarity of states' political institutions or to trade is given in Russett (1967).

for the role that these foundations of culture and identity might play in shaping interstate relations. He bolstered his case with various historical examples. By contrast, we have subjected his argument to a wide variety of systematic empirical tests. Our analyses of states' involvement in militarized interstate disputes, 1950–92, indicate that differences in civilization tell us little about the likelihood that two states will become involved in military conflict: militarized disputes, uses of force, and conflicts involving fatalities are not significantly more common among dyads split across civilizational boundaries than for other pairs of states. Indeed, states in four of the eight civilizations fought more among themselves than with states in other civilizations. The military, political, and economic interests measured by our realist and liberal variables provide a substantially better account of interstate violence than does Huntington's theory.

Disputes between the West and the rest of the world were no more common than between or within most other groups. Nor is there evidence of a clash between Islam and the West except as it involves Israel. The dominance of a civilization by a strong core state, democratic or not, does little to inhibit conflict within the civilization. Conflicts between civilizations became relatively less common, not more so, as the Cold War waned. Civilizations help predict alliance patterns, but they make only a small contribution to understanding countries' political institutions and commercial interactions. Consequently, there is little reason to believe that civilizational differences have important indirect effects on the likelihood of conflict through these variables.

It is important to note some of what we have not explored here. Our empirical analyses necessarily end in 1992. We did not consider acts by non-state actors, such as terrorism, to which Huntington devotes considerable attention. Nor have we investigated

the role of civilizational differences in intrastate conflict, though we briefly discussed the findings of others. There may also be complex, indirect links between the influence of civilizations on intrastate conflict, in rift countries, for example, and the incidence of interstate violence. These and other matters await further research.

We can be grateful that Huntington challenged us to consider the role that civilizations play in international relations, and we can certainly be grateful that it is more benign than he suggested, because civilizations represent a highly aggregated form of human culture that would be difficult to alter. Policies adopted over the course of a few years could not be expected to change cultural characteristics that have evolved over centuries. Fortunately, the evidence we have assembled strongly indicates that national leaders need not attempt such a Herculean task. Civilizations do not define the fault lines along which international conflict occurs. More relevant are the common bonds of democracy and economic interdependence that unite many states, and separate them from others. The realist influences are important for states that do not share liberal ties. For them, *realpolitik* still determines the incidence of conflict. Consequently, policymakers should focus on what they can do: peacefully extending democracy and economic interdependence to parts of the world still excluded. These are more important and more malleable determinants of interstate relations than the cultural characteristics emphasized by Huntington. Strengthening the liberal forces for peace can mitigate what might otherwise appear to be the clash of civilizations.

The absence of significant cultural conflict is encouraging for another reason. A sense of shared identity among peoples who govern themselves democratically constitutes a form of in-group feeling, one that might foster animosity toward those who govern themselves

differently. International commerce and free-market institutions might have similar effects. That is the potentially dangerous aspect of the liberal prescription for peace. But if such a strong cultural factor as civilizational identity has so little impact on interstate conflict, it seems likely that the sense of identity that emerges from a shared political system will not be so threatening either. What we have in common need not endanger the peace with those outside the group.

Nor is Kant's prescription for 'perpetual peace' justified by shared liberal values of tolerance and the nonviolent resolution of conflict alone. Cultural explanations of the liberal peace are but part of the justification for confidence that democracy and interdependence can bring about a more peaceful world. Optimism is also justified by the effects of self-interest on the behavior of both citizens and policymakers. Political leaders in democratic countries will avoid unnecessary wars so that they may retain political office, and commercial interests can be expected to maintain the ties that make them more prosperous – whether these coincide with civilizational boundaries or not. Peace does not depend on moral conversion or common cultural identity when self-interest is involved (Kant, 1795/1970: 105). Civilizations play little role in this.

We close with another verse from the poetic review quoted at the beginning of the article:

Networks and computing make the difference  
fundamental.  
By skewing and redoing social bonds – and  
governmental,  
Since entity-identity is much more problem-  
atic,  
Crash-courses in world politics should not be  
so dogmatic.

(Tipson, 1997: 166)

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### **Appendix: Classification of States by Civilization**

#### **Western**

USA  
 Canada  
 Jamaica  
 Trinidad  
 Barbados  
 Dominica  
 Grenada  
 Belize  
 United Kingdom  
 Ireland  
 Netherlands  
 Belgium  
 Luxembourg  
 France  
 Liechtenstein  
 Switzerland  
 Spain  
 Portugal  
 West Germany/Germany  
 East Germany  
 Poland  
 Austria  
 Hungary  
 Czechoslovakia  
 Italy  
 Malta  
 Finland  
 Sweden  
 Norway  
 Denmark  
 Iceland  
 Israel  
 Philippines  
 Australia  
 Papua/New Guinea

New Zealand  
 Vanuatu  
 Solomon Islands  
 Western Samoa

*Latin American*

Cuba  
 Bahamas  
 Dominican Republic  
 Saint Lucia  
 Saint Vincent and the Grenadines  
 Antigua and Barbuda  
 Saint Kitts and Nevis  
 Mexico  
 Guatemala  
 Honduras  
 El Salvador  
 Nicaragua  
 Costa Rica  
 Panama  
 Colombia  
 Venezuela  
 Ecuador  
 Peru  
 Brazil  
 Bolivia  
 Paraguay  
 Chile  
 Argentina  
 Uruguay

*Hindu*

India  
 Guyana  
 Bhutan  
 Nepal  
 Maldive Islands

*Slavic-Orthodox*

Yugoslavia  
 Greece  
 Cyprus  
 Bulgaria  
 Romania  
 Soviet Union/Russia

*Islamic*

Albania  
 Gambia  
 Mali  
 Senegal  
 Mauritania  
 Niger  
 Chad  
 Guinea  
 Somalia  
 Djibouti  
 Seychelles  
 Morocco  
 Algeria  
 Tunisia  
 Libya  
 Sudan  
 Iran  
 Turkey  
 Iraq  
 Egypt  
 Jordan  
 Syria  
 Lebanon  
 Saudi Arabia  
 Yemen Arab Republic  
 Yemen People's Democratic Republic  
 Kuwait  
 Bahrain  
 Qatar  
 United Arab Emirates  
 Oman  
 Afghanistan  
 Pakistan  
 Bangladesh  
 Malaysia  
 Brunei  
 Indonesia

*African*

Suriname  
 Cape Verde  
 Sao Tome and Principe  
 Guinea-Bissau  
 Equatorial Guinea  
 Benin

Ivory Coast  
 Burkina Faso  
 Liberia  
 Sierra Leone  
 Ghana  
 Togo  
 Cameroon  
 Nigeria  
 Gabon  
 Central African Republic  
 Congo  
 Zaire  
 Uganda  
 Kenya  
 Tanzania  
 Burundi  
 Rwanda  
 Angola  
 Mozambique  
 Zambia  
 Zimbabwe  
 Malawi  
 South Africa  
 Namibia  
 Lesotho  
 Botswana  
 Swaziland  
 Mauritius  
 Malagasy Republic

**Sinic**

China  
 Taiwan  
 North Korea  
 South Korea  
 South Vietnam  
 North Vietnam/Vietnam  
 Singapore

**Buddhist**

Mongolia  
 Myanmar  
 Thailand  
 Cambodia  
 Laos  
 Sri Lanka

**'Lone' States**

Haiti  
 Japan  
 Ethiopia

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