

# **State Failure and the Clash of Civilisations: An Examination of the Magnitude and Extent of Domestic Civilisational Conflict from 1950 to 1996**

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This study quantitatively examines Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilisations' theory using data from the State Failure dataset which focuses on intense and violent internal conflicts between 1950 and 1996. The proportion of state failures which are civilisational has remained mostly constant since 1965. The absolute amount of civilisational conflict has dropped considerably since the end of the Cold War. There is no clear evidence that the overall intensity of civilisational state failures is increasing in proportion to non-civilisational state failures. Also, the predictions of Islam's 'bloody borders' and the Confucian/Sinic-Islamic alliance against the West have not yet occurred. In fact, Islamic groups 'clash' mostly with other Islamic groups. However, the majority of the West's civilisational conflicts, during the Cold War and to a lesser extent after it, are with the Islamic civilisation. Thus it is arguable that Huntington's prediction that the Islamic civilisation is a potential threat to the West is probably more due to the end of the relevance of the Cold War paradigm than any post-Cold War changes in the nature of conflict. This highlights the potential influence of paradigms on policy and should serve as a caution to academics and policy makers to be more aware of the assumptions they make based on any paradigm.

Ever since Samuel Huntington (1993a) first proposed his 'clash of civilisations' theory, there has been a vigorous debate concerning its validity. This debate has taken on a larger importance because it has become less a debate over whether Huntington's theory is correct and more a debate over what will be the nature of conflict and international relations in the twenty-first century. This study's purpose

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is to examine these questions by using the State Failure dataset to examine whether the ‘clash of civilisations’ theory explains the extent of state failure between 1950 and 1996.<sup>1</sup> More specifically, it asks whether civilisational conflicts have become more common and violent since the end of the Cold War. It also asks whether, as Huntington predicts, the Islamic civilisation specifically has engaged in more conflict since the end of the Cold War and whether a Confucian–Islamic alliance has formed against the West.

A state failure is defined by the authors of the dataset as ‘a new label that encompasses a range of severe political conflicts and regime crises exemplified by events of the 1990s in Somalia, Bosnia, Liberia, Afghanistan, and Congo-Kinshasa’ (State Failure Website 2002). Thus, state failures focus on domestic conflict. While Huntington (1993a, 1996a) intended his theory to apply to both international and domestic conflicts, domestic conflicts constitute an important proportion of the conflicts he covers in his theory. Specifically he categorises these conflicts as types of fault-line conflicts, or those conflicts that occur where civilisations border each other.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Huntington (2000) argues that since intrastate conflicts are the most common in the post-Cold War era, they are the most important test of his theory. It should be noted that this is a post hoc defence of his theory in response to a study by Russett, Oneal and Cox (2000) which shows that international conflict did not conform to his theory.<sup>3</sup>

Be that as it may, domestic conflicts have become increasingly important in the international arena for several reasons. First, since the end of the Cold War, a greater proportion of conflicts are internal ones (Carment and James 1997; David 1997). Perhaps due to this as well as the increase in global communications, the more intense media coverage of such conflicts, and international economic interdependence, more international attention has been given to these conflicts. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the end of the Cold War has also changed the international power structure in a way that allows for international intervention in such conflicts to occur more often, and humanitarian intervention has become more accepted in the international community (Cooper and Berdal 1993; Carment and James 2000; Carment and Rowlands 1998). Third, severe state failures such as those in Congo-Kinshasa, the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Burundi have often crossed borders to destabilise entire regions. This occurs, among other reasons, because ethnic groups have populations living in several states and because of refugee flows. Thus, although state failures may at first seem to be purely domestic, they are actually an important international issue.

### **The Debate over Huntington’s Theory**

It is not possible to fully discuss the debate over Huntington’s theory within the scope of a single article. Accordingly, this discussion focuses on highlighting the

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<sup>1</sup> A more detailed description of the State Failure dataset is provided in the methodology section below.

<sup>2</sup> International conflicts between bordering states of different civilisations are the other type of fault-line conflict.

<sup>3</sup> In a reply to Huntington (2000), Oneal and Russett (2000) argue that the boundaries of civilisations are for the most part those of states, so if there is any civilisational conflict it should also occur at the international level.

elements of Huntington's theory, and the debate surrounding it, that are relevant to the questions asked in this study.

Huntington (1993a, 1996a, b) argues that whereas conflicts during the Cold War were based mostly along the ideological divide between the US and Soviet blocs of that era, in the post-Cold War era most conflicts will occur along civilisational lines and these conflicts will be particularly intense. He defines civilisations as

the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of what distinguishes humans from other species. It is defined by both common language, history, religion, customs, institutions and by the subjective self identification of people. (Huntington 1993a, 24)

Huntington divides the world into eight major civilisations: Western, Confucian/Sinic, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and 'possibly' African. Based on this, we can extract the following hypotheses:

H1: The extent of civilisational state failures will increase after the end of the Cold War both in absolute terms and relative to non-civilisational conflict.

H2: The extent of non-civilisational state failures will decrease after the end of the Cold War both in absolute terms and relative to non-civilisational conflict.

H3: Civilisational state failures will be more intense than non-civilisational state failures, especially after the end of the Cold War.

Huntington also makes some predictions regarding which specific civilisations will be involved in conflicts. He predicts that the Islamic civilisation, which has 'bloody borders', will be involved in a disproportionate number of conflicts, especially with the Western civilisation. He also predicts an alliance between the Confucian/Sinic civilisation and the Islamic civilisation against the Western civilisation. These predictions can be described in the following hypotheses:

H4: The extent of civilisational state failures involving the Islamic civilisation will increase both in absolute terms and in proportion to state failures involving other civilisations after the end of the Cold War.

H5: The extent of civilisational state failures involving conflicts between the West and the Islamic and Confucian/Sinic civilisations will increase both in absolute terms and in proportion to state failures involving other civilisations after the end of the Cold War.

These predictions by Huntington are heavily criticised. Many argue that civilisations will not be the basis for future conflict, but there is little agreement over what will be the basis for post-Cold War conflict. Some, like Kirkpatrick et al (1993), Halliday (1997), Heilbrunn (1998), Hunter (1998), Kader (1998), Kirth (1994), Rosecrance (1998), Tipson (1997) and Yamazaki (1996) argue that the civilisations Huntington describes are not united and that most conflicts, both international and domestic, will be between members of the same civilisations. Walt (1997) similarly argues that nationalism remains the most important factor in the post-Cold War era, making conflicts within civilisations as likely as conflicts between them. On the other hand, many argue that modern communications, economic interdependence, borrowing between cultures, and other factors will cause the world to become more united, thus causing a general decrease in conflict (Ahari 1997; Anwar 1998;

Halliday 1997; Ikenberry 1997; Tipson 1997). Others argue that Huntington ignored some important factors that will influence conflict in the post-Cold War era. These include improved conflict management techniques (Viorst 1997), the desire for economic prosperity (Ajami 1993), the influence of economic power (Hunter 1998; Nussbaum 1997), information technology (Barber 1997/1998), that most ethnic conflicts are due to discrimination and not culture (Senghass 1998) and the importance of military power (Rosecrance 1998).

In addition, many take exception to Huntington's arguments regarding Islam's 'bloody borders'. First, some, such as Bartley (1993) and Esposito (1995), argue that Huntington mistakes conflicts caused by other factors with civilisational conflict. Second, some, such as Fuller and Lesser (1995) and Halliday (1996), argue that Islam is not the threat many believe it to be. Third, others, like Kirkpatrick et al (1993) and Mahbubani (1993), argue that the West is being embraced by other civilisations. Fourth, others, including Kader (1998) and Monshipouri (1998), argue that conflicts occur more often within the Islamic civilisation than between it and other civilisations. Fifth, Hunter (1998) argues that the rise in Islamic fundamentalism is not unique to the Islamic civilisation and, furthermore, the enthusiasm for Islamic fundamentalism is waning. On the other hand, even some of Huntington's critics such as Halliday (2000), Hassner (1997a) and Heilbrunn (1998) believe that there may be some truth to Huntington's arguments with regards to clashes between the Western and Islamic civilisations.<sup>4</sup>

Other criticisms of Huntington's theory include: that Huntington got his facts wrong (Anwar 1998; Hassner 1997a; Heilbrunn 1998; Kader 1998; Neckermann 1998; Walt 1997) or even ignored or bent the facts to fit his theory (Pfaff 1997; Hassner 1997b); that his theory is an oversimplification (Hassner 1997a; Pfaff 1997); that his list of civilisations is incorrect (Beedham 1999; Pfaff 1997; Smith 1997; Tipson 1997); that he often contradicts himself (Heilbrunn 1998); that his evidence is wholly anecdotal, leaving room for others to cite counterexamples (Gurr 1994; Halliday 1997); that he provides no systematic analysis of the link between civilisational controversies and political behaviour (Senghass 1998; Rosecrance 1998; Walt 1997); and that his predictions amount to self-fulfilling prophecies (Hassner 1997a; Pfaff 1997; Singhua 1997; Smith 1997; Tipson 1997; Walt 1997).

The results of previous quantitative studies have also tended to be critical of Huntington's theory. Russett, Oneal and Cox's (2000) study on militarised interstate disputes from 1950 to 1992 finds, among other things, that intra-civilisational conflicts were more likely than inter-civilisational conflicts; civilisational conflicts, if anything, waned as the Cold War ended and that Huntington's 'West versus the rest' and 'Islamic threat to the West' predictions were unfounded. They also show that, while civilisational variables are not important, aspects of the realist and liberal theories are important predictors of international conflict.<sup>5</sup> These findings are also consistent with those of Henderson (1997, 1998) that cultural factors do not have a unidirectional impact on international war. Henderson and Tucker (2001) found that, if anything, civilisational differences make states less likely to go to war. Henderson and Singer (2000) show that political factors have a greater influence on civil wars than cultural ones. Gurr (1994) found no support for

<sup>4</sup> For a reply to many of these criticisms, see Huntington (1993b, 1996a).

<sup>5</sup> For a reply to this study, see Huntington (2000).

Huntington's theory among major ethno-political conflicts. Ellingsen (2000) found that there is no real change in the dynamics of ethnic conflict from the Cold War to the post-Cold War eras. Fox (2001b, 2002) also found that, globally, there has been little change in the ratio of civilisational versus non-civilisational ethnic conflict since the end of the Cold War and that there has also been little change in Islamic involvement in civilisational ethnic conflict since the end of the Cold War.

However, Davis and Moore (1997) and Davis, Jagers and Moore (1997) find a connection between international ethnic alliances and international conflict. While this provides some confirmation for Huntington's predictions of civilisational influence in conflicts, it is only limited confirmation for two reasons. First, these findings do not address whether this phenomenon has increased or decreased in strength since the end of the Cold War. Second, the evidence refers to ethnic conflict and not civilisational conflict.

In addition, in a series of studies on terrorism, Weinberg and Eubank (1999) and Weinberg, Eubank and Pedahzur (2002) found that, in the 1980s and 1990s, terrorism was becoming more civilisational. In particular, most terrorism was by Islamic groups against non-Muslims and most new terrorist organisations were Islamic. However, this is by no means conclusive in that it shows only that Muslim groups tend to choose terrorism as a tactic. It does not include other types of violence including guerrilla warfare and high-intensity civil war. That the studies mentioned above (as well as the results of this study), which include several types of domestic conflict, do not confirm this result indicates that domestic conflict, in general, is not civilisational.<sup>6</sup>

While these studies are informative, they in no way make the analysis presented here redundant, for several reasons. First, none of them analyse the specific data examined here. Second, most of them analyse different types of conflicts from those examined in this study. This study examines state failures which include major ethnic wars, revolutionary wars and mass killings. Russett, Oneal and Cox (2000), Henderson (1997, 1998), Henderson and Tucker (2001), Davis and Moore (1997) and Davis, Jagers and Moore (1997) analyse international wars. Weinberg and Eubank (1999) and Weinberg, Eubank and Pedahzur (2002) analyse only terrorism. Fox (2001b, 2002), Gurr (1994), and Ellingsen (2000) examine only ethnic wars. Furthermore, Fox's (2001b, 2002) studies uses the Minorities at Risk dataset, which includes many low-level and non-violent ethnic conflicts which are not included in this study. Third, many of the studies do not cover a significant amount of the post-Cold War era. For example, Russett, Oneal and Cox's (2000) and Henderson and Tucker's (2001) studies do not include data from after 1992 and Henderson (1997) does not include data from after 1989. Fourth, many of these studies were not intended as direct tests of Huntington's theory and are rather studies with findings that are relevant to the theory.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For a further discussion of the debate over Huntington's theory, see Fox (2001a, c).

<sup>7</sup> Other quantitative studies that indirectly assess Huntington's theory include: Brecher and Wilkenfeld (1997), who found that ethnic international crises between 1918 and 1994 were more prone to violence than non-ethnic crises; Fox's (2000a) analysis of the Minorities at Risk dataset, which shows that Islamic ethnic conflicts are no more or less violent than ethnic conflicts involving Christian groups; Jagers and Gurr (1995), who found that the Middle East, an Islamic region, is the most autocratic region of the world; Midlarsky (1998), who found that on two of three measures Islamic states tend to be less democratic; and Fox (1999a, b, 2000b, c, 2001d) who demonstrates that religious factors influence ethnic conflict.

## Methodology

As noted above, the goal of this study is to test specific aspects of Huntington's clash of civilisations argument with respect to domestic conflict using the State Failure dataset.<sup>8</sup> The dataset includes major episodes of 'state failure' which 'is a new label that encompasses a range of severe political conflicts and regime crises exemplified by events of the 1990s in Somalia, Bosnia, Liberia, Afghanistan, and Congo-Kinshasa' (State Failure Website 2002). Thus, this study focuses only on the most intense of conflicts. This is appropriate since Huntington (2000) argues that his theory applies mostly to major conflicts.

This study uses data from three sections of the State Failure dataset, those concerning revolution, ethnic war, and genocide/politicide.<sup>9</sup> Revolutionary wars are defined as

episodes of violent conflict between governments and politically organised groups (political challengers) that seek to overthrow the central government, to replace its leaders, or to seize power in one region. Conflicts must include substantial use of violence by one or both parties to qualify as wars. (Gurr, Harff and Marshall 1997)

Ethnic wars are defined as 'episodes of violent conflict between governments and national, ethnic, religious, or other communal minorities (ethnic challengers) in which the challengers seek major changes in their status' (Gurr, Harff and Marshall 1997). Genocide/politicide is defined as

the promotion, execution, and/or implied consent of sustained policies by governing elites or their agents—or in the case of civil war, either of the contending authorities—that result in the deaths of a substantial portion of a communal group or politicized non-communal group. In genocides, the victimized groups are defined primarily in terms of their communal (ethnolinguistic, religious) characteristics. In politicides, by contrast, groups are defined primarily in terms of their political opposition to the regime and dominant groups. Geno/politicide is distinguished from state repression and terror. In cases of state terror authorities arrest, persecute or execute a few members of a group in ways designed to terrorize the majority of the group into passivity or acquiescence. In the case of geno/politicide authorities physically exterminate enough (not necessarily all) members of a target group so that it can no longer pose any conceivable threat to their rule or interests. (Gurr, Harff and Marshall 1997)

The unit of analysis for the State Failure dataset is a conflict year. Each year during which a particular type of conflict was occurring in a particular state is coded separately, including partial years in which the conflict began or ended.

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<sup>8</sup> The data used in this study are taken from an earlier version of the State Failure dataset than is currently posted at the project's Website (State Failure Website 2003). When this study was performed, the most recent data available at that time were used. The 2003 update adds cases until 2001 and includes some minor alterations in some of the cases from the 1950–96 period which were used in this study; thus those using the updated data will not be able to replicate this study exactly. However, the results are not substantially different for the time period of 1950–96 covered by this study. For further enquiries or copies of the data used for this study, please contact the author at <foxjon@mail.biu.ac.il>.

<sup>9</sup> While abrupt regime transitions are included in the dataset, they are not included in this study because they generally represent changes in regimes, not major conflicts.

In addition to the variables specifically coded for the purposes of this study, which are discussed below, two modifications were made to the data. First, there are several cases where the State Failure dataset codes conflicts by several groups against the state together as a single entry. This study separates them into separate cases.<sup>10</sup> Second, many of the cases in the three categories overlap. For the tests performed on the entire dataset, the overlapping cases were removed from the study.<sup>11</sup> As a result, 774 years of ethnic war, 265 years of genocide/politicide, and 359 years of revolutionary war were coded. Taking overlapping cases into account, this totals 1135 conflict years between 1950 and 1996.

This study coded three additional variables in order to operationalise Huntington's theory. The first simple measure whether a conflict is or is not civilisational. The other two identify the civilisation of the two groups involved in each conflict based on the criteria used by Fox (2001b, 2002).<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that some of these groups are identified as 'mixed' in cases where members of the group involved belong to several civilisations and some are identified as 'indigenous', which refers to indigenous peoples, a type of minority found in many states which does not conform to any of Huntington's civilisations.<sup>13</sup> Conflicts in which one of the groups belongs to either of these categories are identified as not civilisational. It is appropriate to include these cases in this study because Huntington predicts

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<sup>10</sup> There are episodes of conflict which were broken up. First, the joint Serb and Croat war against the Bosnian government from 1992 to 1995 was broken up into two separate cases, one for Serbs and one for Croats. As a result, four conflict years were added. Second, the Abkhaz and South Ossetian rebellion from 1991 to 1993 in Georgia was broken up into two separate cases, one for Abkhaz and one for South Ossetians. As a result, three conflict years were added. Third, the original codings for India combine all local rebellions by the Nagas, Mizos, Tripuras, Bodos, others in Assam (1952–), Sikhs in Punjab (1982–), and Muslims in Kashmir (1989–). This study separated this into four categories: the Nagas, Mizos and Tripuras, who are all mostly Christian indigenous peoples (1952–); the Bodos and Assamese, who are Moslem minorities (1952–); the Sikhs (1982–); and the Kashmiris (1989–). As a result, 68 conflict years were added. Fourth, in the original dataset, Lebanon from 1965 to 1992 was coded together. This study coded 1965–74 as Palestinians against the Christian Maronite authorities and 1975–92 as a civil war between general Moslems and Christians. Fifth, in the original dataset, conflicts by the Georgian, Azerbaijani, Kazakh and Baltic republic governments coded together (1986–91). This study separated them into two cases, one for Moslem Azerbaijanis and Kazakhs, and one for Georgia and Baltic republic governments. As a result, six conflict years were added.

<sup>11</sup> There are 84 conflict years of revolutionary war which overlap with ethnic wars, 39 conflict years of genocide/politicide which overlap with ethnic wars, and 43 conflict years where cases of ethnic war overlap with both revolutionary wars and genocides.

<sup>12</sup> Fox (2001b, 2002) follows Huntington's topology of civilisations but found the need to make several judgement calls in cases where Huntington was unclear. First, Huntington is unclear whether there is a Buddhist civilisation or whether it is part of the Confucian/Sinic civilisation. Buddhist groups are coded here as part of the Confucian/Sinic civilisation. Second, Huntington does not deal with several religions, including the Jewish, Druze, Sikh and Ba'Hai religions. Israel is coded as Western and the other groups are coded as part of the Islamic civilisation because these are the closest civilisations which fit. Third, the Afro-Americans in several Latin American states are coded as part of the African civilisation. Fourth, black Muslim groups in Africa are coded as part of the Islamic civilisation. Fifth, several other minorities which were difficult to place in civilisational groupings based on culture were placed based on their religion, which seems to be the main determining factor for Huntington. Sixth, some groups are of mixed origins and are coded as mixed. Conflicts involving these groups are not considered civilisational. Seventh, indigenous groups, which are similar to each other but fit into none of Huntington's categories, were coded as 'indigenous'. Conflicts involving these groups are not considered civilisational. For more detailed arguments regarding these coding criteria see Fox (2001b, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> Forty-three conflict years are coded as 'mixed' and 139 are coded as 'indigenous'.

that civilisational conflicts will be the most common and intense of *all* conflicts in the post Cold War era.

There are five variables from the State Failure dataset used here to measure the intensity of conflicts all of which are coded on a yearly basis. The first four apply to ethnic and revolutionary wars. The first variable measures the number of combatants involved in the conflict on the following scale:

- 0: less than 100 combatants or activists;
- 1: 100–999 combatants or activists;
- 2: 1,000–4,999 combatants or activists;
- 3: 5,000–14,999 combatants or activists;
- 4: more than 15,000 combatants or activists.

The second measures the number of deaths due to the conflict on the following scale:

- 0: less than 100 fatalities;
- 1: 100–999 fatalities;
- 2: 1,000–4,999 fatalities;
- 3: 5,000–9,999 fatalities;
- 4: more than 10,000 fatalities.

The third measures the portion of the country affected by the fighting on the following scale:

- 0: less than one-tenth of the country and no significant cities are directly or indirectly affected;
- 1: one-tenth of the country (one province or state) and/or one or several provincial cities are directly or indirectly affected;
- 2: more than one-tenth and up to one-quarter of the country (several provinces or states) and/or the capital city are directly or indirectly affected;
- 3: from one-quarter to one-half of the country and/or most major urban areas are directly or indirectly affected;
- 4: more than one-half of the country is directly or indirectly affected;

The fourth variable is the average of the previous three.<sup>14</sup> The final variable was coded only for cases of genocide/politicide and measures the number of annual deaths on the following scale:

- 0: less than 300;
- 0.5: 300–999;
- 1.0: 1,000–1,999;
- 1.5: 2,000–3,999;
- 2.0: 4,000–7,999;
- 2.5: 8,000–15,999;
- 3.0: 16,000–31,999;
- 3.5: 32,000–63,999;
- 4.0: 64,000–127,999;
- 4.5: 128,000–255,999;
- 5.0: 256,000 + .

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<sup>14</sup> In cases where data were missing for one of the variables, the remaining two were averaged.

While it would have been preferable for exact numbers to be used instead of the scales above, the State Failure project did not do so because in many cases it was simply not feasible to get exact numbers. In recent and well-covered conflicts on which there is no shortage of information, the numbers of combatants and casualties are often unclear or in dispute. In conflicts that occurred 30 or 40 years ago, this situation is even worse. Thus these scales are the best approximation that can be constructed given the information available. They are based on the concept of magnitude, with each category being double or more of the preceding category.

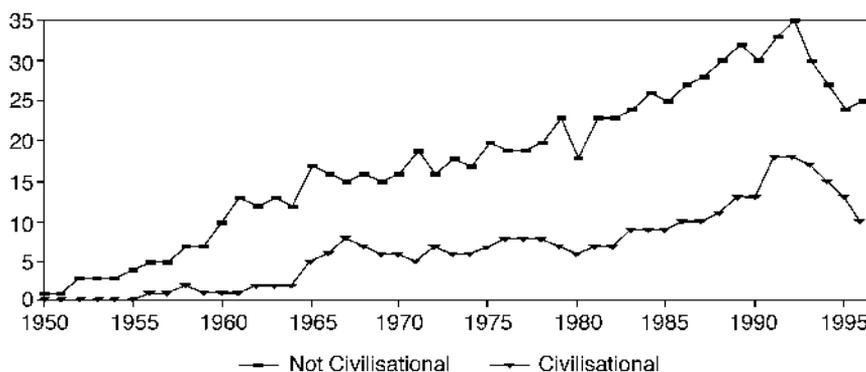
Several types of tests are performed in order to test Huntington's predictions. First, the number of civilisational and non-civilisational conflicts that occurred, or continued, during every year from 1950 to 1996 are assessed, both in absolute terms and in proportion to each other. This is to test Huntington's prediction that the extent of civilisational conflict will increase with the end of the Cold War (H1 and H2). Second, the magnitude of civilisational and non-civilisational conflicts is compared between the Cold War and post-Cold War eras. This is to test Huntington's prediction that the magnitude of civilisational conflicts will increase with the end of the Cold War (H3). Third, the number of conflicts between each potential pair of specific civilisations is assessed for both the Cold War and post-Cold War eras. This is to test whether Huntington's predictions of increased conflicts between specific civilisations, especially between Islam and the West, in the post-Cold War era are correct (H4 and H5). Finally, we test whether Huntington's predictions that certain civilisations, especially the Islamic civilisation, will be particularly violent in the post-Cold War era. This is done by assessing, for each civilisation, the percentage of all conflicts which involve the civilisation, the percentage of conflicts which are civilisational, and the percentage of conflicts which occurred in the post-Cold War Era (H4 and H5). In this final test only, the unit of analysis is not a year of conflict but rather a year of conflict for each side. That is, the number of cases are doubled because for each year of conflict there are two sides. For example, a conflict between a Western and Islamic group would be coded twice for this portion of the study, once for the Western group and once for the Islamic group. Similarly, a conflict between two groups of the same civilisation would also be coded twice.

Finally, it is important to note that since the data used here constitute a very close estimate of the entire universe of cases<sup>15</sup>, statistical significance is only a measure of the strength of the relationship. That is, since the data presented here are all the cases that exist rather than a sample of all cases, any differences found are real differences.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> While the State Failure project clearly made a good-faith effort to include all cases which meet the project's criteria, one must always make allowances for the possibility that some cases were missed. However, even if this is the case, the dataset clearly contains the overwhelming majority of relevant cases.

<sup>16</sup> This point can be illustrated by a different example. Election exit poll results usually have an error of a few percentage points because a small number of people, perhaps 1000, are polled in order to estimate how an entire population of millions of people voted. Thus, if two candidates are within a few percentage points of each other, this difference has no statistical significance. However, if once the actual votes are counted one candidate wins by one vote in the final election, even though that vote constitutes a fraction of a per cent difference, the difference in votes between the two candidates is a real difference of one vote and is enough for that candidate to win because it represents a difference in all votes actually cast and not just a sample that estimates what this result is likely to be.

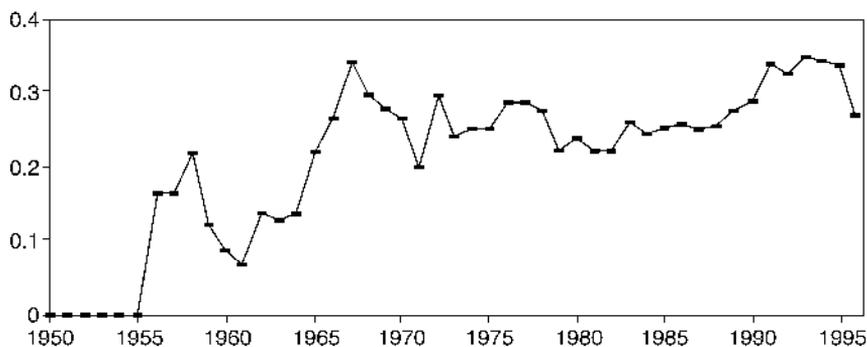


**Figure 1.** Number of civilisational versus non-civilisational state failures, 1950–96.

### Data Analysis and Discussion

The analysis in Figure 1 shows the number of ongoing civilisational and non-civilisational state failures occurring on a yearly basis from 1950 to 1996. The results clearly show that at no time was civilisational conflict ever more common than non-civilisational conflict, either during the Cold War or after it. Furthermore, both types of conflict follow the same general pattern of an overall rise between 1950 and 1992, followed by a sharp drop.

The analysis in Figure 2, which shows the proportion of state failures that are civilisational, confirms this. From 1965 to 1996, civilisational conflicts constituted between 21% and 36% of all state failures. Before 1965, there were never more than one or two civilisational state failures at any one time. Thus the greatest proportional jump in civilisational conflict did not occur in the wake of the Cold War; rather, it occurred in the mid-1960s, at the height of the Cold War. In fact, the proportion of state failures which were civilisational peaked at about 35% in 1967, which is nearly as high as the 36% peak in 1994. All of this clearly contradicts Hypotheses 1 and 2. In absolute terms, the number of civilisational state failures dropped in the post-Cold War era and the proportion of state failures which are civilisational has remained relatively constant from 1965 onwards.



**Figure 2.** Proportion of civilisational state failures, 1950–96.

**Table 1.** Magnitude of civilisational versus non-civilisational conflicts during the Cold War and post-Cold War eras

Conflict type	Variable	(N)	Cold War era civilisational differences		Post-Cold War era civilisational differences		
			Not different civilisations	Different civilisations	Not different civilisations	Different civilisations	
Ethnic	Combatants	539	3.12	2.72 <sup>b</sup>	219	3.15	3.20 <sup>f</sup>
	Fatalities	497	1.47	1.59	224	1.34	1.61
	Area	547	1.78	1.51 <sup>a</sup>	227	2.08 <sup>c</sup>	2.02 <sup>f</sup>
	Average	547	2.14	1.92 <sup>a</sup>	227	2.21	2.22 <sup>e</sup>
Mass killings	Deaths	222	2.25	2.39	41	2.75	2.14
Revolution	Combatants	239	3.04	3.50 <sup>a</sup>	96	2.93	3.11 <sup>d</sup>
	Fatalities	233	1.89	1.16 <sup>a</sup>	87	1.77	1.78
	Area	263	2.62	2.69	96	2.85	3.11
	Average	263	2.51	2.80	96	2.51	2.67

<sup>a</sup> *t*-Test between this and mean for 'not different civilisations' in same time period, significance = 0.01.

<sup>b</sup> *t*-Test between this and mean for 'not different civilisations' in same time period, significance = 0.001.

<sup>c</sup> *t*-Test between this and mean for 'not different civilisations' during the Cold War era = 0.05.

<sup>d</sup> *t*-Test between this and mean for 'different civilisations' during the Cold War era = 0.05.

<sup>e</sup> *t*-Test between this and mean for 'different civilisations' during the Cold War era = 0.01.

<sup>f</sup> *t*-Test between this and mean for 'different civilisations' during the Cold War era = 0.001.

The analysis in Table 1 examines the comparative intensity of civilisational and non-civilisation conflicts both during and after the Cold War. Because there are different intensity variables for different types of state failures, they are examined separately. While the average intensity of civilisational ethnic wars increased with the end of the Cold War, the average intensity of these conflicts in the post-Cold War era is virtually the same as for non-civilisational conflicts. The intensity of non-civilisational mass killings increased with the end of the Cold War, whereas the intensity of civilisational mass killings decreased. Finally, civilisational revolutions were more intense than non-civilisational revolutions both during and after the Cold War, but while the average intensity of non-civilisational revolutionary wars remained constant, the average intensity of civilisational revolutionary wars dropped after the end of the Cold War. This evidence provides, at best, mixed results with regard to Hypothesis 3's prediction that civilisational conflicts will be more intense than non-civilisational conflicts, especially after the end of the Cold War. In two out of three categories, the intensity of civilisational state failures dropped after the end of the Cold War. Also, in one category, post-Cold War civilisational state failures were more intense than non-civilisational state failures; in one category the intensity was virtually the same and in the final category civilisational state failures were less intense. This is more or less the distribution we would expect if the differences in intensity between civilisational and non-civilisational state failure were random. Given all of this, it is clear that although the hypothesis cannot be fully rejected, the evidence also provides little support for it.

The analyses in Tables 2 and 3 show the extent of conflict between specific civilisations and the extent to which specific civilisations participate in civilisational conflict. Hypothesis 4 predicts that the extent of civilisational state failures

involving the Islamic civilisation will increase both in absolute terms and in proportion to conflicts involving other civilisations after the end of the Cold War. The evidence shows that although there has been an increase in the proportion of conflict years involving Islamic groups since the end of the Cold War, most of the increase is due to conflicts within Islam rather than civilisational conflicts. Specifically, while the proportion of conflict years involving Islamic groups increases from 27.39% to 35.65% of all conflict years in the post-Cold War era, the proportion of Islamic conflicts which are civilisational remains virtually the same at 35.18% during the Cold War and 38.46% after it. Thus, conflicts involving only Islamic groups such as the religious revolution in Algeria, the civil war in Afghanistan, and the Kurdish rebellions against Iran, Iraq, and Turkey are the norm for conflicts involving the Islamic civilisation, and conflicts like the civil wars in the former Yugoslavia and Lebanon are in the minority.<sup>17</sup> However, Islamic groups do account for the greatest number of conflict years both during and after the Cold War. Given this, Huntington's prediction that Islam has 'bloody borders' can be said to be partly correct in that Islamic groups may be 'bloody' but, by far, most of the blood is shed within their borders.

Many other civilisations have borders considerably more 'bloody' than those of the Islamic civilisation. Both during and after the Cold War, the Western and Slavic-Orthodox civilisations engaged in a greater proportion of civilisational conflict years than did the Islamic civilisation. In addition, in the post-Cold War era, the Hindu and Confucian/Sinic civilisations had a greater proportion of civilisational conflicts than did the Islamic civilisation. Based on the criteria of proportion of conflict years which are civilisational in the post-Cold War era, it is the Confucian/Sinic civilisation which has the 'bloodiest' borders, with 72% of its conflicts being civilisational. However, the absolute number of civilisational conflict years involving the Islamic civilisation is greater than that of any other civilisation, but this can be explained as a part of the general tendency of that civilisation to engage in conflict. Given all of this, it is clear that the evidence contradicts Hypothesis 4. While the Islamic civilisation may engage in a lot of conflict, that conflict is not particularly civilisational, especially when compared with some other civilisations. Furthermore, this pattern of behaviour is not new to the post-Cold War era.

Hypothesis 5 predicts that the extent of civilisational conflict between the West and the Islamic and Confucian/Sinic civilisations will increase both in absolute terms and in proportion to conflicts involving other civilisations after the end of the Cold War. The evidence clearly contradicts this hypothesis. As far as conflict between the Western and Confucian/Sinic civilisations is concerned, this hypothesis is wrong in that there are no such conflicts either during or after the Cold War. The extent of civilisational conflict between the Western and Islamic civilisations also dropped slightly as a proportion of all conflict years involving the Western civilisation from 73 of 183 (39.89%) during the Cold War to 27 of 70 (38.57%) after it. It also dropped as a proportion of civilisational conflict years involving the Western civilisation from 70.87% during the Cold War to 69.23% after it. As a proportion of all conflict years involving the Islamic civilisation, conflict with the

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<sup>17</sup> Although some would classify pro-Western governments such as Algeria and Turkey as being part of the Western civilisation. Huntington (1996a, 26–7) very clearly shows on his map of world civilisations that they are considered part of the Islamic civilisation.

Table 2. Number of conflict years between specific civilisations

Civilisation	Civilisation									Total conflict years (both sides)	
	Western	Conf./Sinic	Slavic-Orth.	Latin American	Hindu American	Hindu	Islamic	African	African		
Cold War era, 1950–89											
Western	39										183
Confucian/Sinic	0	66									227
Slavic-Orthodox	0	0	5								20
Latin American	0	0	0	60							144
Hindu	10	7	0	0	39						143
Islamic	73	19	10	0	9		142				452
African	20	0	0	0	0		57	135			347
Indigenous	2	37	0	24	39		0	0			102
Mixed	0	32	0	0	0		0	0			32
Post-Cold War era, 1990–96											
Western	12										70
Confucian/Sinic	0	0									25
Slavic-Orthodox	7	0	13								48
Latin American	0	0	0	21							48
Hindu	0	7	0	0	7						42
Islamic	27	11	15	0	14		68				221
African	5	0	0	0	0		18	58			139
Indigenous	7	0	0	6	7		0	0			20
Mixed	0	7	0	0	0		0	0			7
All years, 1950–96											
Western	51										253
Confucian/Sinic	0	66									252
Slavic-Orthodox	7	0	18								68
Latin American	0	0	0	81							192
Hindu	10	14	0	0	46						185
Islamic	100	30	25	0	23		210				673
African	25	0	0	0	0		75	193			486
Indigenous	9	37	0	30	46		0	0			122
Mixed	0	39	0	0	0		0	0			39

**Table 3.** Data on specific civilisations: percentage of all conflicts, percentage of conflicts which were civilisational and which occurred in the post-Cold War era

Civilisation	Cold War era			Post-Cold War era		
	Total number of conflict years	% of all conflict years	% civilisational	Total number of conflict years	% of all conflict years	% civilisational
Western	183	11.09	56.28	70	11.29	45.71
Confucian/Sinic	227	13.76	11.45	25	4.03	72.00
Slavic-Orthodox	20	1.21	50.00	48	7.74	52.38
Latin American	144	8.73	16.67	48	7.74	0.00
Hindu	143	8.67	19.58	42	6.77	50.00
Islamic	452	27.39	35.18	221	35.65	38.46
African	347	21.03	22.19	139	22.42	16.55
Indigenous	102	6.18	0.00	20	3.23	0.00
Mixed	32	1.94	0.00	7	1.13	0.00
Total	1650	100.00	33.77	620	100.00	38.50

West also dropped from 73 of 452 (16.15%) during the Cold War to 27 of 221 (12.21%) after it. It also dropped as a proportion of civilisational conflict years in which the Islamic civilisation was involved from 43.45% during the Cold War to 31.76% after it. Thus, the expected increase in civilisational conflict between the West and the Islamic–Confucian/Sinic alliance did not occur, though the drop in Western versus Islamic conflicts was not dramatic.

However, the above results do show how Huntington may have come to his conclusions that such conflicts would be prominent, at least with regard to the ‘Islamic versus the West’ conflicts. Among state failures, the majority of civilisational conflicts involving the Western civilisation are with the Islamic civilisation. Given this, a Westerner, such as Huntington, could easily conclude that Islam is the greatest threat to the West. Yet this is not new to the post-Cold War era and, in fact, the proportion of civilisational conflict between the two civilisations has dropped slightly since the end of the Cold War as a proportion of all conflict from 73 of 1650 (4.42%) during the Cold War to 27 of 620 (4.35%) after it. As described above, it has also dropped as a proportion of all conflicts involving Western and Islamic civilisations individually. Also, both during and after the Cold War ‘West versus West’ conflict years numbered about the same as ‘West versus Islam’ conflict years.

This opens the question as to why someone such as Huntington might have concluded that this large number of ‘West versus Islam’ conflicts is new to the post-Cold War era. One possible answer is that although ‘Islamic versus West’ conflicts may have been more common during the Cold War, the psychology of the Cold War could have obscured this fact. That is, many, if not most, policy makers and academics in the West ideologically believed that its greatest enemy was communism, and other conflicts were either considered less important or were viewed in the context of the Cold War. Many internal conflicts took on Cold War dimensions when both sides received support from either the Western or Soviet blocs. Thus, perhaps, the end of the Cold War and the lifting of the era’s ideological blinders allowed for a fresh look at the nature of world conflict and patterns that had always been there, and were even in a decline but were previously obscured by the imperatives of the Cold War, became evident and were mistaken for being new.

## Conclusions

In all, as is the case with previous quantitative studies, the preponderance of the evidence examined here contradicts Huntington’s ‘clash of civilisations’ theory. The proportion of state failures which are civilisational has remained more or less constant since 1965. The absolute amount of civilisational state failure has dropped considerably since the end of the Cold War, as has non-civilisational state failure. There is no clear evidence that the overall intensity of civilisational state failures is increasing in proportion to non-civilisational state failures. In addition, the predictions of Islam’s ‘bloody borders’ and the Confucian/Sinic–Islamic alliance against the West have not yet occurred. In fact, the Western, Confucian/Sinic, Slavic-Orthodox, and Hindu civilisations all have ‘bloodier’ borders than does the Islamic civilisation.

However, this study has shed some light on the nature of major domestic conflict. For instance, the evidence shows that although Islamic groups account for

more conflict years than groups from any other civilisation, most of this conflict occurred with other Islamic groups. In fact, overall both during and after the Cold War, most conflicts were not civilisational. This supports the contentions of those who argue against Huntington's prediction that smaller national identities will amalgamate into larger civilisational identities. These critics' predictions that intra-civilisational differences, be they national or sub-national, will continue to be more important seem to be correct, at least as far as state failures through to 1996 are concerned. That is, conflicts within Islam such as the civil war in Algeria, the numerous other militant Islamic opposition movements throughout the Islamic world, the civil war in Afghanistan and the various Kurdish rebellions, are more common than conflicts along Islam's borders with other civilisations such as those in Chechnya and the former Yugoslavia. This leads to the conclusion that policy makers should worry less about Islam's 'bloody borders' and more about conflicts within Islam as well as other sub-civilisational conflicts.

Despite this, as discussed above, among state failures, the majority of the West's civilisational conflicts, both during and after the Cold War, are with the Islamic civilisation. Even though this trend has weakened with the end of the Cold War, it can explain why Huntington may have come to believe that Islam is the greatest threat to the West. During the Cold War, it is arguable that the most of the West's attention was directed to Cold War conflicts, and only when the Cold War ended was attention given to other issues, such as conflicts with the Islamic civilisation. Furthermore, as noted above, during the Cold War many conflicts between the Western and Islamic civilisations were perceived not as civilisational but as Cold War conflicts. Thus, Huntington's prediction that the Islamic civilisation is a potential threat to the West is probably more due to the end of the relevance of the Cold War paradigm than any post-Cold War changes in the nature of conflict.

This finding highlights the potential influence of paradigms on policy. When the Cold War paradigm was the dominant one, any threat to the West by the Islamic civilisation was considered at most secondary to the more important threat of communism. In fact, many 'Islamic versus West' conflicts were probably interpreted as proxy conflicts involving challenges by communist-supported groups. That is, policy makers saw what they expected to see. When those expectations change, what people see will also change. Thus, if policy makers come to the conclusion that Islam is the next great threat to the West, then that is what these policy makers are likely to see.

Given this, the fears expressed by Hassner (1997a), Pfaff (1997), Singhua (1997), Smith (1997), Tipson (1997) and Walt (1997), among others, that Huntington's predictions amount to a self-fulfilling prophecy should be taken seriously, especially in the wake of the events of 11 September 2001. If predictions like those of Huntington combined with the activities of groups like Al Qaeda succeed in convincing Western policy makers that Islam is a threat, then it will be treated as one. If this occurs, conflicts between the West and Islam would probably be given more attention and provoke a more conflictive response from the West, making escalation more likely and peaceful resolution less common than may otherwise have been likely.

In addition, this finding explains why certain conflicts seem to attract more attention than others. In recent years, most of the conflicts that have attracted the most attention and intervention have been civilisational conflicts, particularly between Western or Christian groups and other civilisations and/or conflicts

involving Muslim groups. These include the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and in East Timor. Yet the West refused to intervene significantly in Rwanda, perhaps the most serious case of genocide of the 1990s. While it is clear that this can not be blamed on Huntington, it is arguable that certain types of conflicts are more likely to attract international attention and intervention by the West, all other things being equal.

Given all of this, a careful examination of Huntington's claims, as well as the claims of those who disagree with him, is crucial. How academics and policy makers choose to understand the nature of conflict in the post-Cold War era will probably influence the official policies toward future conflict, and consequently the course of the conflicts themselves. While our understanding of the nature of post-Cold War conflict is by no means complete, and for that matter our understanding of conflict during the Cold War was also probably incomplete, it is clear that the preponderance of quantitative evidence both from this study, which is limited to certain types of conflict, and from other quantitative studies overwhelmingly contradicts Huntington's 'clash of civilisations' theory. Accordingly, it is important that both academics and policy makers seek new avenues of understanding conflict with the awareness that what they expect to see can easily and unnecessarily be transformed into reality.

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