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Do Muslims Engage in More Domestic Conflict than Other Religious Groups?

JONATHAN FOX

This article examines the validity of the stereotypical idea which is not endorsed here, that Muslim groups are more violent than groups of other religions, using data on domestic conflict from 1950 to 1996 from the State Failure dataset. The theories of Islam and violence in the literature can be divided into three categories: those that say Muslims in general are more violent, those that say certain Muslims are more violent and those that say Muslims are no more violent than other religious groups. The results show that while on some measures Muslim groups are more violent than other groups, on others they are not. That is, while on one measure Muslim groups show the highest levels of violence, on other measures, Christian and Buddhist groups score the highest. Thus, while there is some evidence that Muslim groups are more violent, it is not conclusive and is certainly not enough to support the stereotype of the Islamic militant.

For some time, and especially since the events of September 11, 2001, there has been a perception in many circles that Islam, or at least some elements within Islam, are particularly prone to violence, especially against the West.[1] This stereotype can be found among members of academia, policy-making circles and the media. The purpose of this study is to assess whether there is any factual basis for this stereotype when examining domestic conflict between 1950 and 1996 using empirical data from the State Failure dataset (see methodology section, p.32) That is, are at least some Muslims disproportionnally violent when compared to members of other religions?

It is important to emphasize that while there are certainly some Muslims who fit the description of violent militants, this author is not endorsing this description as a general stereotype. Examples of religious militants can be found in nearly every religion. For example, a small number of Christians in the United States (US) violently oppose abortion. A small number of

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Jewish extremists in Israel are responsible for vigilante violence against Palestinians. Buddhists in Sri Lanka have violently repressed the Hindu Tamil minority. Hindus in India have violently rioted against Muslim minorities.

These examples are just a few among many and demonstrate that the potential for violence exists in most major religions.[2] The issue of whether Islam or any other religion stands out as most violent is an open question. Clearly anyone wishing to use anecdotal evidence to show that any individual religion is particularly violent can provide examples to back up this point. Yet anyone wishing to oppose such a claim can easily come up with counter-examples. Accordingly, the only definitive way to establish the relative propensity toward violence of the world's religions is to collect all of the examples of violence and examine the proportional representation of each religion in this violence. In other words, only a quantitative study, such as this one, can truly answer the question of whether Muslims engage in more conflict than groups of other religions. The focus of this study is on domestic conflict.

THEORIES OF ISLAM AND VIOLENCE

The theories of Islam and violence can be divided into three categories: those that say Muslims in general are more violent, those that say certain Muslims are more violent and those that say Muslims are no more violent than other religious groups.

A prime example of the first category is Samuel Huntington who discusses the issue in the context of his 'clash of civilizations' theory.[3] Huntington divides the world into eight major civilizations which are expected to be the basis of conflict in the post-Cold War era. These civilizations include the Western, Confucian/Sinic, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and 'possibly' African civilizations. All of these civilizations, save the African civilization, are wholly or partially defined by religion.[4] He argues, in particular, that the Islamic civilization will have 'bloody borders' and will be in conflict in particular with the West. While all of his arguments are controversial, it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss all of Huntington's critics. Accordingly, the focus here is on those arguments directly relevant to the major question of this study: whether Muslims are more violent than other religious groups.[5]

Huntington sums up his argument that Islam is conflict-prone when he states that 'the most violent fault lines [conflicts] are between Islam and its...neighbors'.[6] This is expected to be particularly true at the micro-level,[7]

which is the focus of this study. The Islamic civilization, while accepting modernity, according to Huntington, rejects Western culture and prefers to search for the answers to its problems within Islam. This is, to some extent, fuelled by the increase in Islamic wealth from oil, but it is more probably due to the failure of governments in Islamic states that were guided by Western ideologies to successfully address social problems, causing a return to Islam.[8]

Furthermore, Islam and the West, historically, have mutually feared each other and rejected each other's culture. This is exacerbated by the fact that the Islamic civilization considers itself superior to others and the Islamic religion divides the world into those who follow Islam and those who do not.[9]

Huntington's arguments concerning Islam and the West are, to say the least, not uncontroversial. For example, Ajami argues that Huntington underestimates the power of modernity, economics and secularism to reshape world politics and the Islamic world.[10]

Similarly, Bartley argues that democracy is a result of economic development and not of the ideological agenda of the West and that Islamic fundamentalists are clashing with modernity, not other civilizations.[11]

Fuller and Lesser add that this clash may eventually result in the secularization of Islam.[12]

Pfaff adds that Islamic fundamentalism is controversial even within the Islamic civilization.[13]

Esposito and Halliday take this one step further and argue that Islamic fundamentalism is more of a threat to the authoritarian regimes in Islamic states than it is to the West.[14]

Also, many argue that any clashes between Islam and the West are due to secular causes and not religious ones. These secular causes include economic, national, political, cultural, psychological, post-colonial and strategic issues.[15]

Others argue that the West, rather than being rejected, is being embraced by other civilizations.

Kirkpatrick argues that other civilizations aspire to the Western model.[16]

Mahbubani argues that, while power among civilizations is shifting, much of the non-West fears the retreat of Western leadership and that while the West fears Islam, the Islamic civilization is weak and poses no real threat.[17]

Still others argue that the Islamic civilization is divided and conflicts occur more often within it than between it and other civilizations.[18]

Hunter combines most of these arguments as well as others into a full-scale attack on Huntington's predictions regarding the Islamic

civilization.[19] She argues that the Islamic civilization is not monolithic. Nationalism is a potent factor within the Islamic civilization causing many divisions within it. As a result, there are both many clashes within the Islamic civilization and Islamic states often have better relations with non-Islamic states, as was the case during the 1991 Gulf War. The rise in Islamic fundamentalism, which Huntington perceives as a threat to the West, is not a civilizational issue. It is rather caused by the same economic and social causes that have resulted in fundamentalist movements within the West.[20] Thus, the conflict between faith and secularism is not civilizational at all. Furthermore, the enthusiasm for Islamic fundamentalism is waning due to the failures of Iran's Islamic state. While there may be some tensions between the Western and Islamic civilizations, these tensions have more to do with the unequal distribution of wealth, power and influence than cultural issues.

Also, the only empirical test of Huntington's theory which directly addresses the issue of Islam, civilizations and conflict found that ethnic conflict was not particularly civilizational or Islamic.[21]

On the other hand, many agree with Huntington's arguments. For example, Bernard Lewis argues that Islam and Christianity are both exclusive, not merely universal, religions, thus almost guaranteeing a clash between them.[22] Even some of Huntington's critics, such as Hassner[23] and Heilbrunn,[24] believe that there may be something to Huntington's arguments with regard to clashes between the Western and Islamic civilizations.

Furthermore, many of those described above disagree with Huntington's proposition that Islam will be a threat to the West, not that Muslims engage in a disproportional level of violence.

While this review of the debate over Huntington's assertions regarding Islam is by no means complete, it is sufficient to highlight Huntington's argument that Muslims, in general, are more conflict-prone than members of other religions. It is important to emphasize that this conflict is expected to be with members of other religions. It is also important to emphasize that Huntington never really explains the mechanism by which Islam leads to violence. Many of Huntington's critics on this topic provide a good example of those who make the second argument that Islam is no more violent than other religions.

A version of the third argument that it is only some Muslims who are conflict-prone is discussed by Daniel Pipes. This argument differentiates from mainstream Islam and militant Islam, which he calls Islamism. Pipes defines Islamism as 'a political movement that takes the religion of Islam and turns it into the basis of a totalitarian ideology that shares much with prior versions, namely fascism and Marxism-Leninism'. It is these

Muslims, including terrorist movements like Al-Qaeda, who are the source of violence and antagonism to the West. Furthermore, there is a struggle for control within the Islamic world between these Islamists and other Muslims. While Islamists are a minority of the Islamic world, they are an influential one and many of their actions are popular within broader segments of the Islamic world.[25] Pipes also argues that Islamists are also a serious threat to many regimes in the Muslim world.[26]

Another version of this third argument is exemplified by the White House policy towards Islam since the September 11 suicide bombings. This policy differentiates between 'terrorists' and Muslims, arguing that Islam is a peaceful religion and those who use it to justify violence are distorting the religion.[27] The major difference between this version of the third argument and that espoused by Pipes is whether calls for violence are legitimate within Islam. Pipes contends that historically, calls for violence such as those made by Islamists are within the bounds of Islamic doctrine, though they are by no means the only possible interpretation. He also notes that these interpretations of Islam are very dangerous both for those within and outside the Islamic world. On the other hand, President Bush considers these calls for violence the result of 'a fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam'.[28]

Previous empirical studies of the topic of Islam and conflict are mixed. Fox found that while religion is particularly important in ethnic conflicts involving Muslims, these conflicts are not disproportionally violent.[29] Fox also found that there has been no change since the end of the Cold War in the pattern of Islamic involvement in ethnic conflict.[30] Price found that Islam does not influence the extent of human rights violations by governments.[31]

However, two studies that focus on terrorism found that during the early 1980s terrorism shifted to primarily attacks by Islamic groups on Western targets. They also found that most terrorist groups formed during the 1990s, as well as most of the terrorist groups active in the late 1990s, were Islamic groups.[32]

Studies regarding Islam and democracy are also mixed. Midlarsky found that Islam is correlated with autocracy on two measures but not on a third measure.[33] Fisch found that Islam is correlated with authoritarianism.[34] Price found that Islam was not positively or negatively correlated with democracy.[35] Fox found Islamic states to be more autocratic.[36] Also Jaggers and Gurr found the Middle East to be the most autocratic region in the world.[37]

In sum, there is support for all three theories of Islam and conflict. Unfortunately this study, due to limitations in the data (which are discussed

below), can only establish whether Islamic groups participate in a disproportional amount of conflict and whether conflict involving Muslims is more violent. If it is found that Islamic groups do not engage in more violence, this is not a problem as it would rule out the other two theories. However, if it is found that conflict involving Muslims is more violent, this study can not assess whether this is because Muslims in general are more violent or because a certain subset of Muslims are more violent. This is because the data used here are not specific enough to accomplish this. Nevertheless, this study is useful in that it should at a minimum be able to disprove one of the three competing theories on the topic and may disprove two of them.

It is important to emphasize at this point that while the theory that Muslims are more violent is attributable, among others, to Huntington, this study is not intended as a direct test of Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' theory. Rather it is intended to answer the question of whether the members of any particular religion engaged in a disproportional level of domestic conflict on a worldwide basis between 1950 and 1996.

METHODOLOGY

This study compares the participation in domestic conflict by different religions using the State Failure dataset. The State Failure dataset was created with funding from the US government by a consortium of academics. The data used in this study is housed at the Center for International Development and Conflict Management at the University of Maryland. 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'.[38] Thus, this study focuses only on the most intense of conflicts.

This study uses data from three sections of the State Failure dataset, those concerning revolution, ethnic war and genocide/politicide.[39] Revolutionary wars are defined as 'episodes of violent conflict between governments and politically organized 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'.[40] 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'.[41] Genocide/politicide is defined as:

> [t]he 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 acquiesence. 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.[42]

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. Each conflict involves a majority and a minority group. For some portions of this study each participant is considered a separate unit of analysis. That is, if a conflict is between a Christian minority group and an Islamic majority group, each is considered separately. Similarly if both groups were Islamic, each would be considered a separate unit of analysis.

In addition to this and the religion variable specifically coded for the purposes of this study, 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.[43]

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.[44] 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 1,135 conflict years between 1950 and 1996. In cases where the participants, rather than a conflict year, are the unit of analysis, this would be 2,270 conflict years.

This study differentiates between five categories of religion: Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Animism and other or undetermined. While there are clearly major divisions within all of these religious groupings, especially the other or undetermined category, these more general

categories have been selected so that each has a sufficient number of cases for meaningful statistical analysis. Among minority groups (taking overlapping cases into account), there are 473 conflict years involving Christian groups, 361 involving Muslim groups, 42 involving Buddhist groups, 69 involving Animist groups and 190 involving groups in the other or undetermined category. Among majority groups (taking overlapping cases into account), there are 470 conflict years involving Christian groups, 313 involving Muslim groups, 141 involving Buddhist groups, none involving Animist groups and 211 involving groups in the other or undetermined category

This study performs several tests. First, the extent of state failure in the world is examined on a yearly basis from 1965 to 1996. The unit of analysis for this test is participants. The reason the test begins with 1965 rather than 1950 is because there are too few cases before 1965 for meaningful comparison. This test will establish if there are more Muslim groups engaged in conflict than groups of other religions.

The second test examines the extent of state failure in the world between 1965 and 1996 controlling for religion in proportion to population size. That is, this test takes into account how many members of different religions exist in the world. One would expect religious groups with more members to be involved in more conflict due to increased opportunity. This is calculated as follows: the yearly number of state failures for each group (taken from the previous test) is divided by that group's percentage of the world population (in decimals). This gives us the number of conflicts in which the group would be engaged if they constituted the entire population of the world. This number is divided by the number of actual state failures, resulting in a standardized yearly measure which shows whether a group engages in more or less than the mean level of state failures on a yearly basis. This test will establish whether Islamic participation in state failure is disproportional to what we would expect given the size of their population. For this test, population is based on data from the *World Christian Encyclopedia*.[45] The *Encyclopedia* has data on world religious population for 1970, 1990 and 1995. Accordingly, this study uses the 1970 data for 1965 to 1980, the 1990 data for 1981 to 1992 and the 1995 data for 1993 to 1996.[46]

Third, we examine who each type of religious group is in conflict with. This is done by showing which religious groups each type of religious group is in conflict with as a percentage of all conflict in which that religious group engages. This test will establish whether, as Huntington predicts, Islamic groups are in conflict primarily with members of other religious groups.

Fourth, we test whether conflicts involving Muslims are more intense than other conflicts. This is done by examining several variables in the State Failure dataset controlling for religion. In this test, the unit of analysis is a conflict and the test is performed twice, once controlling for the minority religion and once for the majority religion. Since, as described below, some of the variables are specific to the type of conflict involved, this test is performed separately for each type of conflict. This test will establish whether conflicts involving Muslim groups are particularly intense.

There are six 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 to 999 combatants or activists
2. 1000 to 4,999 combatants or activists
3. 5,000 to 14,999 combatants or activists
4. 15,000 or more 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 to 999 fatalities
2. 1,000 to 4,999 fatalities
3. 5,000 to 9,999 fatalities
4. 10,000 or more 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 the country and/or most major urban areas are directly or indirectly affected
4. more than one-half the country is directly or indirectly affected

The fourth variable is the average of the previous three.[47]

The fifth 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 +

The final variable measures the duration of the conflict. This variable was not included in the State Failure dataset but can be calculated by counting the number of years each conflict is coded within the dataset. For this variable only, the unit of analysis is an entire conflict. Thus a conflict that took ten years, for example, would be coded for all of the other variables ten times with yearly intensity variables. However, for duration, it would be coded once as ten years.

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.

It is also important to note that while this study can test the quantity and intensity of conflict involving various religions it can not test causality. This is because the data available in the State Failure dataset are limited to these variables. Thus, it can determine whether conflicts involving a particular religion are disproportionally common or intense, it cannot determine whether this is because of any religious factor, whether that factor is common to all or some members of the religion. Nevertheless, these data are sufficient to potentially refute the stereotype of the militant Muslim because

a finding that Muslims are not more violent, regardless of the reasons for this, undermines that stereotype. However, while a finding that Muslims are more violent would be consistent with that stereotype, due to issues of causality such a finding would not be definitive proof that the stereotype is justified.

Finally, it is important to note that since the data used here constitute a very close estimate of the entire universe of cases,[48] 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. For example, election exit poll results usually have an error of a few percentage points because a small number of people, perhaps 1,000, 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.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 examines whether Islamic groups participate in more state failures than groups of other religions. The results show that since 1972 it is Christian groups, and not Muslim groups, that participate in the most conflict. However, throughout the vast majority of the period covered in this table, Muslim groups participate in either the most (between 1968 and 1971) or the second most conflicts, after Christian groups.

Figure 2 shows religious groups' participation in conflict relative to their proportion of the world population. Throughout the period covered in this test, Muslim groups participate in a higher than average level of conflict, ranging between 1.48 and 2.22 times the average level of conflict. Furthermore, from 1980 onwards Muslim groups engage in the highest levels of conflict when taking population size into account. This shows that, especially since 1980, Muslim groups have been particularly bloody. However, since 1975 Christian groups have also participated in an above average level of conflict, ranging between 1.16 and 1.55 during this period.

FIGURE 1
STATE FAILURES 1965–96 CONTROLLING FOR RELIGION*

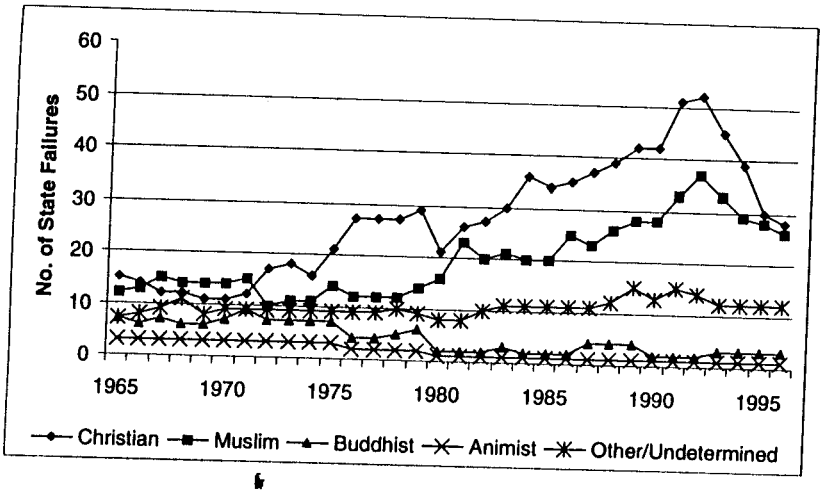

FIGURE 2
PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF STATE FAILURES 1965–96
CONTROLLING FOR RELIGION

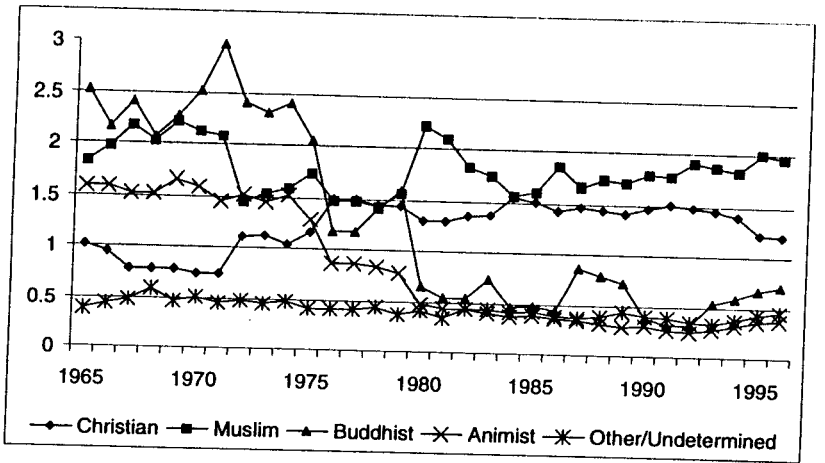

TABLE 1
WHOM THEY ARE FIGHTING, 1950–96

Religion	%Conflict Years With				
	Christian	Muslim	Buddhist	Animist	Other or Undetermined
Christian	76.3%	15.5%	0.0%	0.0%	8.2%
Muslim	21.7%	63.5%	3.1%	4.7%	7.0%
Buddhist	0.0%	11.5%	20.8%	20.2%	47.5%
Animist	0.0%	46.4%	53.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Other or Undetermined	19.2%	11.7%	21.7%	0.0%	47.4%

Percentage by row.
Chi-Squared for cross-tabulation of religious minorities and majorities (upon which this table is based) .001

The test in Table 1 examines whether religious groups are in conflict with groups of other religions and, if so, which ones. The results show that both Islamic and Christian groups are primarily in conflict with members of their own religion. In all, these results show that while Islamic groups may shed a lot of blood, this blood is primarily the blood of other Muslims. The same is true for Christian groups. However, after conflicts with members of their own religion, conflicts between Christian and Muslim groups are the greatest proportion of conflict for each type of religious group. In contrast, religious groups in the other three categories are in conflict primarily with members of other religions.

Tables 2 and 3 examine the intensity of state failures. Ethnic and genocide/politicide state failures are less intense for Muslim groups on all seven measures used here with these results being statistically significant for three of them. Revolutionary state failures are less intense for Muslim minorities on four out of five measures with these results being statistically significant for one of the measures, which finds conflicts involving Muslim minorities to be less intense. The results regarding Muslim majorities are more mixed. Ethnic state failures involving Muslim majorities are more intense on three of five measures with the results being statistically significant for two of the variables, one which shows these conflicts to be less intense and one which shows them to be more intense. One measure for genocide/politicides involving Muslim majorities shows these conflicts to be more intense but the other shows them to be less intense with neither of these results being statistically significant. Finally, for revolutionary state failures three of five variables show conflicts involving Muslim majorities to be more intense with the results being statistically significant for one of these variables.

TABLE 2
INTENSITY OF CONFLICTS 1950–96, CONTROLLING FOR MINORITY RELIGION

Conflict Type	Variable	Religion of Minority					Average
		Christian	Muslim	Buddhist	Animist	Other or Undetermined	
Ethnic	Combatants	2.96	3.02	3.22	1.67**	**3.37*** **	3.04
	Fatalities	1.48	1.28***	2.00	**1.93*** **	1.65**	1.49
	Area	**2.03*** **	1.61**	1.00***	1.90	1.69	1.80
	Average	2.07	1.95***	2.10	2.16	**2.24****	2.11
	Duration in Years	8.49*	10.24	na	22.0	**33.2*** **	11.78
Genocide or Politicide	Deaths	2.05	2.21	**4.00*** **	3.57***	2.16	2.31
	Duration in Years	6.89	5.09	4.67	na	**7.33**	6.36
Revolution	Combatants	2.84**	3.23*	3.33	**4.00*** **	3.16	3.06
	Fatalities	1.78	1.86	1.38	na	**1.93**	1.81
	Area	2.57*	2.86	1.67**	**3.41****	2.81	2.70
	Average	2.37***	2.66	2.22	**3.71*** **	2.64	2.54
	Duration in Years	**8.10**	4.82	2.25	na	5.33	6.31

* = T-test between this mean and mean for all other groups combined sig <= .05
** = T-test between this mean and mean for all other groups combined sig <= .01
*** = T-test between this mean and mean for all other groups combined sig <= .001
Highest score in each category is in bold.

In all, these results do not show any clear pattern of conflicts involving Islamic groups being more intense than average and, if anything, tend to show these conflicts are less intense. On 14 of 24 of all measures of intensity and four of seven statistically significant measures, Muslim groups score lower than average. Furthermore, Muslim groups do not score the highest on any of the intensity variables measured here. In contrast, groups in the other or undetermined category score the highest nine times, Buddhist groups score highest eight times, Animist groups score highest four times and Christian groups score highest three times.

TABLE 3
INTENSITY OF CONFLICTS 1950–96, CONTROLLING FOR MAJORITY RELIGION

Conflict Type	Variable	Religion of Majority				Average
		Christian	Muslim	Buddhist	Other or Undetermined	
Ethnic	Combatants	2.84***	2.96	3.02	**3.46*** **	3.04
	Fatalities	1.42	1.64*	**1.86*** **	1.18***	1.49
	Area	**2.11*** **	1.89	1.86	1.12***	1.80
	Average	2.14	2.16	**2.18**	1.94***	2.11
	Duration in Years	8.65*	8.30*	17.00	**32.86****	11.79
Genocide or Politicide	Deaths	2.00**	2.40	2.23	**4.00*** **	2.31
	Duration in Years	5.76	7.31	**7.67**	4.33	6.36
Revolution	Combatants	2.85***	3.23*	**3.65*** **	3.03	3.06
	Fatalities	1.82	1.79	**2.10**	1.63	1.81
	Area	2.61	2.80	**2.90**	2.69	2.70
	Average	2.40***	2.62	**3.10*** **	2.51	2.54
	Duration in Years	7.91	4.88	4.67	**5.80**	6.31

* = T-test between this mean and mean for all other groups combined sig <= .05
** = T-test between this mean and mean for all other groups combined sig <= .01
*** = T-test between this mean and mean for all other groups combined sig <= .001
Highest score in each category is in bold.

CONCLUSIONS

Do Muslim groups engage in a disproportional level of violence? The results are mixed. Christian groups engage consistently in more violent domestic conflicts when looking at absolute numbers but when taking population size into account, Muslim groups engage in more violent domestic conflicts. Even using this measure, Christian groups also engage in more conflict than average but less than do Muslim groups. However, when looking at conflict intensity, Muslim groups, if anything, score lower than average and certainly do not engage in a disproportional level of

violence. Thus, it can be said that Muslim groups engage in a disproportional quantity of violence but this violence is not disproportionally intense. Furthermore, most of this violence is not inter-religious violence. In fact, 63.5 per cent of the Islamic groups in this study involved in state failure-level conflicts are in conflict with other Islamic groups.

In contrast, a case can be made from the data that Buddhist groups are the most violent. While, Buddhist groups engaged in a less than average quantity of conflict after 1980, between 1965 and 1975 they engaged in the highest level of conflict proportional to population size. The intensity of conflict involving these groups is well above average. They score above average in 13 out of 23 measures of intensity for which data on Buddhist groups are available and the level of violence by Buddhist groups is more intense than any other group on eight of these measures. Furthermore, 79.2 per cent of Buddhist groups in the dataset are engaged in conflict with groups of other religions. What makes this result particularly interesting is that Buddhism is a religion that is doctrinally pacifist.

Thus, while there is some evidence that Muslim groups are disproportionally violent, it is by no means conclusive. It is certainly not nearly strong enough to justify a general stereotype of Islam being the world's most violent religion. Furthermore, previous studies found similar results.[49] This begs the question – why does this stereotype exist?

One potential answer is that this study focuses on domestic conflict and not international conflict. Yet this answer is unsatisfying because the acts that likely inspired this stereotype mostly took place within the context of domestic conflicts. That the data from this study are only current through to 1996 is also not an adequate answer because the stereotype existed well before 1996. That the data do not cover the type of international terrorism perpetrated by Al-Qaeda is also not an adequate answer because these acts did not become very common until the late 1990s, well after the stereotype was firmly entrenched in the Western psyche.

There are several additional factors that may help to explain this stereotype. All of them are dependent on the understanding that the stereotype of the Islamic militant is one that exists particularly in the West.

First, the Iranian Revolution was one of the most reported upon events of its time. It was exotic and made a lasting impression. For many it was the first real look into the Islamic world and had a great impact on Western opinions, even though it was, in fact, one of many revolutions in the second half of the twentieth century.

Second, as demonstrated by Weinberg, Eubank and Pedahzur, Muslim groups are responsible for the majority of the world's terrorism.[50] The purpose of terrorism is to create fear and anxiety in a target population in

order to get them to make some form of political decision. While it is unclear whether the latter goal has been achieved, that the stereotype of the Islamic militant is so strong in the West implies that this terrorism has generated the fear and anxiety it was intended to produce.

Thus, the stereotype of the Islamic militant may be a product of the policy decision of many Islamic groups to choose terrorism as their preferred means of achieving political change. This explanation is consistent with the data in that terrorism is one of the less intense forms of political violence. Guerrilla warfare and full-scale civil wars are certainly more intense and less intense forms of opposition are mostly non-violent and, therefore, would not have been included in the State Failure dataset. That Muslim groups engage in lower than average levels of violence is consistent with the argument that their violent conflicts mostly take the form of terrorism.

Third, media coverage may bear some responsibility. As noted earlier, the Iranian Revolution was one of the most covered events of its time. Israel has one of the highest concentrations of international reporters outside Washington DC, resulting in constant coverage of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Terrorist events are often more dramatic than ongoing conflicts. Also, terrorist events may get more coverage because each single event is treated separately while ongoing wars get high levels of coverage initially but coverage tends to drop off after that.

Fourth, the overt religious element of many of the conflicts involving Muslim groups may provide an explanation. Westerners, especially in the US, are taught to believe that religion and politics must be kept separate.[51] Yet many of the most dramatic conflicts involving Muslim groups overtly involve religion.

Many of these potential explanations point to a more general conclusion: it may be that the source of the stereotype of the Islamic militant is a minority of religious militant Muslim groups. It is these groups that engage in terrorism. Iran's revolutionaries certainly fit into this category. These groups certainly attract media coverage and the religious element is most striking in conflicts involving these groups. Thus, it may not be the overall amount or intensity of conflict that is responsible for the stereotype, but rather the striking nature of a portion of this conflict. Unfortunately this explanation can not be tested with the currently available data and, accordingly, should be the topic of further research.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Ted R. Gurr and the staff of the State Failure project, (see note 38) without whom this article would not have been possible. All remaining errors of fact or

interpretation remain that of this author alone.

2. For a more detailed discussion of the potential for violence found in most religions, see Jonathan Fox, 'Is Islam More Conflict Prone than Other Religions? A Cross-Sectional Study of Ethnoreligious Conflict', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 6/2 (Summer 2000) pp.1–23.
3. Samuel P. Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations?', *Foreign Affairs* 72/3 (1993) pp.22–49; idem, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (NY: Simon & Schuster 1996).
4. The Islamic and Hindu civilizations are named after the religions upon which they are based. The Confucian/Sinic civilization includes Confucianism, and probably Buddhism. For more details on this see the methodology section of this work. The West is considered unique in its adherence to the concept of separation of church and state. (Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations* note 3, p.70) and is, in part, defined by 'the effects of the Reformation and...[its] combined Catholic and Protestant cultures' (ibid. p. 46). The Slavic-Orthodox civilization is based, in part, upon the Orthodox branch of Christianity (ibid. pp.45–6). Latin American culture is distinguished from the West, in part, by the fact that it is primarily Catholic (ibid. p.46). Finally, the Japanese civilization has a distinct religious tradition including Shintoism.
5. For a discussion of the debate over Huntington's theory see, Jonathan Fox, 'Civilizational, Religious, and National Explanations for Ethnic Rebellion in the Post-Cold War Middle East', *Jewish Political Studies Review* 13/1–2 (Spring 2001) pp.177–204; idem, 'Clash of Civilizations or Clash of Religions, Which is a More Important Determinant of Ethnic Conflict?' *Ethnicities*, 1/3 (Dec. 2001) pp.295–320.
6. Huntington *Clash of Civilizations* (note 3) p.183.
7. Ibid.
8. Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press 1993). Juergensmeyer similarly argues that in the Third World, in general, many states are returning to their indigenous religions due to the failure of governments guided by Western ideologies. Similar arguments with respect to Islam are made by Mary J. Deeb, 'Militant Islam and the Politics of Redemption', *Annals, American Association of Political and Social Sciences* 524 (1992) pp.52–65; Azzedine Layachi and Abdel-Kader Halreche, 'National Development and Political Protest: Islamists in the Maghreb Countries', *Arab Studies Quarterly* 14/2–3 (1992) pp.69–92; and James Piscatori, 'Accounting for Islamic Fundamentalisms', in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.), *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Charachter of Movements* (Univ. of Chicago Press 1994) pp.361–73.
9. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, (note 3) pp.32, 109–20, 185, 209–18.
10. Faoud Ajami, 'The Summoning', *Foreign Affairs* 72/4 (1993) pp.2–9.
11. Robert L. Bartley, 'The Case for Optimism', *Foreign Affairs* 72/4 (1993) pp.15–18.
12. Graham E. Fuller and Ian O. Lesser, *A Sense of Siege: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West* (Boulder, CO: Westview 1995).
13. William Pfaff, 'The Reality of Human Affairs', *World Policy Journal* 14/2 (1997) pp.89–96.
14. John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (Oxford: OUP, 2nd edn. 1995); Fred Halliday, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East* (NY: St Martin's Press 1996).
15. Esposito (note 14); Fuller and Lesser (note 12) and Mahmood Monshipouri, 'The West's Modern Encounter with Islam: From Discourse to Reality', *Journal of Church and State* 40/1 (1998) pp.25–56.
16. Jeane J. Kirkpatrick et al., 'The Modernizing Imperative', *Foreign Affairs* 72/4 (1993) pp.22–6.
17. Kishore Mahbubani, 'The Dangers of Decadence', *Foreign Affairs* 72/4 (1993) pp.10–14.
18. Monshipouri (note 15); Brian Beedham, 'The New Geopolitics: A Fading Hell', *The Economist*, 31 July 1999, p.s10; Zerougui A. Kader, 'The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order' *Arab Studies Quarterly* 20/1 (1998) pp.89–92.
19. Shirleen T. Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West: Clash of Civilizations or Peaceful Coexistence?* (Westport, CT: Praeger; with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC 1998).

20. Many echo the argument that the rise in fundamentalism is occurring internationally and is, at least in part, a reaction to modernity. E.g., see Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.), *Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Politics, Economies and Militance* (Chicago, IL: Univ. of Chicago Press 1991); Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.), *Fundamentalisms and Society: Reclaiming the Sciences, the Family, and Education* (Univ. of Chicago Press 1993); Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.), *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Charachter of Movements* (Univ. of Chicago Press 1994).
21. Jonathan Fox, 'Islam and the West: The Influence of Two Civilizations on Ethnic Conflict', *Journal of Peace Research* 38/4 (July, 2001) pp.459–72. Most other empirical tests of Huntington's thesis which examine ethnic conflict, all domestic conflict and international conflict disprove his general theory regarding the clash of civilizations, though most do not address the issue of Islam in particular. These include: Errol A. Henderson, 'Culture or Contiguity: Ethnic Conflict, the Similarity of States, and the Onset of War, 1820–1989', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41/5 (Oct. 1997) pp.649–68; Errol A. Henderson, 'The Democratic Peace Through the Lens of Culture, 1820–1989', *International Studies Quarterly* 42/3 (Sept. 1998) pp.461–84; Errol A. Henderson and J. David Singer, 'Civil War in the Post-colonial World, 1946–92', *Journal of Peace Research* 37/3 (2000) pp.275–99; Errol A. Henderson and Richard Tucker, 'Clear and Present Strangers: The Clash of Civilizations and International Conflict', *International Studies Quarterly* 45/2 (2001) pp.317–38; Bruce Russett, John R. Oneal and Michalene Cox, 'Clash of Civilizations, or Realism and Liberalism Deja Vu? Some Evidence', *Journal of Peace Research* 37/5 (2000) pp.583–608; Tanja Ellingsen, 'Patterns of Conflict: Towards Civilizational Clashes? Civilizational Differences and Intrastate Conflicts 1979–1998', paper presented at the International Studies Association 42nd annual conference in Chicago (Feb. 2001); Tanja Ellingsen, 'The Relevance of Culture in UN Voting Behavior', paper presented at the International Studies Association 43rd annual conference in New Orleans, (March 2002).
22. Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (Oxford: OUP 1993).
23. Pierre Hassner, 'Morally Objectionable, Politically Dangerous', *The National Interest* 46 (Winter 1997) pp.63–9.
24. Jacob Heilbrunn, 'The Clash of Samuel Huntingtons', *The American Prospect* 39 (1998) pp.22–8.
25. Daniel Pipes, 'A New Round of Anger and Humiliation: Islam after 9/11', in Wladyslaw Pleszczynski (ed.), *Our Brave New World: Essays on the Impact of September 11* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press 2002) pp.41–61; Daniel Pipes and Mimi Stillman, 'The United States Government: Patron of Islam?', *Middle East Quarterly* (2002).
26. Esposito (note 14); Halliday (note 14) and Hunter (note 19) make similar arguments.
27. Pipes (note 25); Pipes and Stillman (note 25).
28. 'Freedom and Fear at War', speech to Congress, 20 Sept. 2001 at: <www.nationalreview.com/document/document092101.shtml>.
29. Fox, 'Is Islam More Conflict Prone than Other Religions?' (note 2); Jonathan Fox, 'Are Middle East Conflicts More Religious?', *Middle East Quarterly* 8/4 (Fall 2001) pp.31–40.
30. Fox, 'Islam and the West' (note 21).
31. Daniel E. Price, *Islamic Political Culture, Democracy, and Human Rights* (Westport, CT: Praeger 1999); Daniel E. Price, 'Islam and Human Rights: A Case of Deceptive First Appearances', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41/2 (2002) pp.213–25.
32. Leonard B. Weinberg and William L. Eubank, 'Terrorism and Democracy: What Recent Events Disclose', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 10/1 (1998) pp.108–18; Leonard Weinberg, William Eubank and Ami Pedahzur, 'Characteristics of Terrorist Organizations 1910–2000, presented at the 25th annual meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology in Berlin, Germany (July 2002).
33. Manus I. Midlarsky, 'Democracy and Islam: Implications for Civilizational Conflict and the Democratic Peace', *International Studies Quarterly* 42/3 (1998) pp.458–511.
34. M. Steven Fisch, 'Islam and Authoritarianism', *World Politics* 55/ 1 (2002) pp.4–37.
35. Price, *Islamic Political Culture, Democracy, and Human Rights* (note 31).

36. Fox, 'Is Islam More Conflict Prone than Other Religions?' (note 2); Fox, 'Are Middle East Conflicts More Religious?' (note 29).
37. Keith Jaggers and Ted R. Gurr, 'Tracking Democracy's Third Wave with the Polity III Data', *Journal of Peace Research* 32/4 (1995) pp.469–82.
38. State Failure website at www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/stfail. A copy of the State Failure data can also be obtained at this location.
39. 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.
40. Ted R. Gurr, Barbara Harff and Monty G. Marshall, 'Internal Wars and Failures of Governance, 1954–1996' <www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/stfail> accessed 19 May 1997.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. 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, 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 Bosos and Assamese who are Muslim 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 to 1974 as Palestinians against the Christian Maronite authorities, and 1975 to 1992 as a civil war between general Muslims and Christians. Fifth, in the original dataset, conflicts by the Georgian, Azerbaijani, Kazakh and Baltic republic governments were coded together (1986–91). This study separated them into two cases, one for Muslim Azerbaijanis and Kazakhs, and one for Georgia and Baltic republic governments. As a result, six conflict years were added.
44. 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.
45. D. B. Barret, G. T. Kurian and T. M. Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Oxford: OUP, 2nd edn. 2001).
46. Muslims constituted 15.0 per cent of the world population in 1970, 18.3 per cent in 1990 and 18.9 per cent in 1995. Christians were 33.5 per cent, 33.2 per cent and 33.1 per cent, respectively. Buddhists were 6.3 per cent, 6.1 per cent and 6.0 per cent respectively. Animists were 4.3 per cent, 3.8 per cent and 3.8 per cent respectively. Other groups were 40.9 per cent, 38.6 per cent and 38.2 per cent respectively.
47. In cases where data was missing for one of the variables the remaining two were averaged.
48. 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.
49. Fox, 'Is Islam More Conflict Prone than Other Religions?' (note 2); Fox, 'Islam and the West' (note 21).
50. Weinberg and Eubank (note 32), Weinberg Eubank and Pedahzur (note 32).
51. Jonathan Fox, 'Religion: An Oft Overlooked Element of International Studies', *International Studies Review* 3/3 (Fall 2001d) pp.53–73.