



Try Again: A Reply to Russett, Oneal & Cox

Author(s): Samuel P. Huntington

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Try Again: A Reply to Russett, Oneal & Cox

SAMUEL P. HUNTINGTON

Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies, Harvard University

Russett, Oneal & Cox (2000) (henceforth RO&C) claim that their analysis of militarized interstate disputes between 1950 and 1992 provides a test of my hypotheses concerning clashes of civilizations. It does nothing of the kind, and their claim that it does is simply untrue.

As they note, the Cold War ended in 1989. Hence, the Cold War constitutes well over 90% of the period they analyze. My clash of civilizations thesis, however, deals with the post-Cold War period. It is an effort, as I write in the book's opening pages, to shed some light on 'how global politics after the Cold War will differ from global politics during and before the Cold War' (Huntington, 1996: 34). The book is 'meant to be an interpretation of the evolution of global politics after the Cold War' (p. 13). 'The central theme of this book is that culture and cultural identities, which at the broadest level are civilizational identities, are shaping the patterns of cohesion, disintegration, and conflict in the post-Cold War world' (p. 20). I contrast the bipolarity and importance of ideology in the Cold War with the multipolar, multicivilizational character of the post-Cold War world, a contrast dramatized by the maps on pp. 24–27. Sentence after sentence in the book begins with phrases such as 'In the post-Cold War world'

and 'In the emerging world'. That is what the book is about. It is not about the Cold War, and an analysis of conflicts during the Cold War can neither prove nor disprove its central argument.

Second, the RO&C dataset is not only temporally irrelevant, but also extremely limited. It includes only interstate conflicts, which are a small, and possibly quite unrepresentative, sample of the violent conflicts in the world. They also appear to be decreasing in frequency compared with intrastate conflicts. (According to Wallensteen & Sollenberg, 2000: 638, out of 110 armed conflicts in 94 countries during the period 1989–99, only 7 were interstate, and a further 9 were intrastate conflicts with foreign intervention.) If RO&C had looked at the post-Cold War period, they would have found very few interstate wars, even though, as the data they cite from Gurr show, many ethnonpolitical conflicts have been occurring.

Third, while they make a passing reference to the central concern of the book with the dangers of escalation in intercivilizational conflicts, they nonetheless focus their analysis on the relative frequency of intercivilizational and intracivilizational wars in the Cold War. As they show, the frequency of intracivilizational conflicts varied among civilizations during the Cold War. As I point out,

however, throughout much of history most wars have been intracivilizational. This continues to be the case today, as I emphasize with the data from Gurr and other sources set forth on pp. 256–258.¹ Gurr's data suggest that, in 1993–94, 60% of ethnopolitical conflicts were intracivilizational and 40% were intercivilizational. The argument of the book does not concern the frequency of conflicts, however, but rather, as I elaborate at length, particularly in Chapter 11, the escalation dynamics of intercivilizational conflicts as a cause for concern in contemporary global politics.

The RO&C article, in short, is not what it pretends to be, because it does not test the central theses of my book which deal with the post-Cold War world. If RO&C want to do that, they will have to try again.

References

Huntington, Samuel P., 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Russett, Bruce; John Oneal & Michaelene Cox, 2000. 'Clash of Civilizations, or Realism and Liberalism Déjà Vu? Some Evidence', *Journal of Peace Research* 37(5): 583–608.

Wallensteen, Peter & Margareta Sollenberg, 2000. 'Armed Conflict, 1989–99', *Journal of Peace Research* 37(5): 635–649.

SAMUEL P. HUNTINGTON, b. 1927, PhD in Political Science (Harvard University, 1951); Albert J. Weatherhead III University Professor and Chairman, Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies, Harvard University. Most recent book (edited with Lawrence E. Harrison): *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress* (Basic Books, 2000).

¹ In this connection, RO&C refer to my argument on the 'bloody borders' of Islam, and triumphantly state that while this may be so, Islam 'is also bloody internally', which simply duplicates the argument I made and the language I used (pp. 257–258): 'Islam's borders are bloody, and so are its innards.'