Samuel Huntington looks at the future of global politics in the post-Cold War era in his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Huntington strongly believes that the post-Cold War world order is going to be significantly different from the bi-polar Cold War order in which the United States and the Soviet Union were the world’s two superpowers. In the 1990’s and in the future Huntington does not see the bi-polar world order or a world order dominated by the United States or the West. The United States and West will still have major influences in world affairs, just not a dominant overpowering influence in world affairs like they used to earlier in the twentieth century. Huntington sees a future multipolar world order with multiple civilizations having major influence in the world. Huntington believes these civilizations will have problems peacefully coexisting with each other, which will result in increased tension or conflict between these civilizations.

Some of the major questions of the book Huntington tries to address in his book are what constitutes a major civilization and what are the major civilizations. Huntington believes that religion is the major identifying factor in a civilization, with political form of government, linguistic patterns, and other cultural factors having more minor roles in the identification of a civilization (45). Huntington believes that the states within the civilizations are more likely to get along with each other better due to their shared characteristics than with states in other civilizations. Huntington also believes that some civilizations will get along better than others, because some civilizations share more characteristics than others. Then Huntington identifies in his opinion what are the major civilizations in the world in the 1990’s and going forward. According to Huntington the major civilizations in the world are Sinic, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic (includes North Africa), Orthodox, Western, Latin American and possibly African (45-47). Although Huntington concedes Buddhism is a major world religion, he does not believe it constitutes a civilization because it has been incorporated into other civilizations like the Sinic and Japanese (47-48).

I agree with Huntington in that religion is the major identifying factor in a civilization with other factors like linguistic and political forms of government having more minor roles. Although, the Western world today is seen as more secular, the West has had a history of the separation of church and state for hundreds of years. Other civilizations like Islamic, Hindu, Sinic, and Japanese in the past have not had these religious separations like the West has. I partially agree with Huntington that civilizations that share more common characteristics with each other are more likely to get along. For example the Orthodox and Western civilizations are more likely to get along with each other than with Islamic civilization. Orthodox and Western civilization share more religious and cultural characteristics with each other than Islamic civilization. Sinic and Japanese civilization share more in common with each other than with Latin American civilization; however, I would argue that Sinic civilization would be more likely to get along with Latin American civilization because of the history of Japanese-Sinic conflict. This leads to me strongly disagreeing with the assertion Huntington makes that Japan is more likely to submit to Chinese influence or get along with China. These countries still today share a mutual distrust and in some cases intense hatred of each other going to back to World War II. I partially disagree with Huntington that states within the same civilization are going to more likely to get along with each other than states in other civilizations. While many states within the same civilization will get along better than with other states in different civilizations, I think Huntington at times does not give enough attention to nationalism or intra-civilization conflict in his book. China and Vietnam are very similar culturally to each other; however, they have been enemies for hundreds of years mainly because of Vietnamese nationalism. America made the totally incorrect assumption that China and Vietnam were allies, which led to America’s involvement in Vietnam. Also, toward the end of the book in Huntington’s hypothetical war between different civilizations, the war starts of as an intra-civilizational conflict between Vietnam and China. I think this undermines the premise of his book that conflict will occur between civilizations, not within them. I also disagree with his belief that relations between North Korea and South Korea will improve due to cultural similarities. The possibly of conflict between these two states continues to be definitely there, and will not change until there major political differences are resolved. The genocide in Rwanda between Hutu’s and Tutsi’s is also another example of a recent intra-civilizational conflict.

Huntington’s identification of what the major civilizations in the world are is contestable in my opinion. I do think he does a pretty good job in dividing the major civilizations in the world are; however, there may be multiple problems with his classifications. I do agree with Huntington that the Sinic and Japanese cultural are different enough from each other to be constituted as different civilizations. I also agree with Huntington that China is the leading state in the Sinic civilization, with North Korea, South Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam being the other states in the Sinic civilizations. Even though some of these states are enemies of each other, they share enough religiously, linguistically, and culturally to be constituted under the same civilization.

I partially agree with Huntington’s classification of Islamic civilization even though Shia and Sunni Islam are not divided into different civilizations like the different sects of Christianity are in Latin American, Western, and Orthodox civilizations. Shia and Sunni Muslims in many cases do not get along with each other at all, as Iraq is a good example. In some cases Shia-Sunni relations are worse than Orthodox-Catholic relations today. It could be argued that Iran has less in common religiously or linguistically with Saudi Arabia, compared to Western civilization (especially Spain and Portugal) and Latin American civilization. So Huntington could have divided Islamic civilization into Sunni Islamic civilization and Shia Islamic civilization. However, in Huntington’s defense you could argue that Iran and I believe Azerbaijan are not enough states to constitute a civilization. Also, Azerbaijan shares more linguistic characteristics with Turkey than Iran.

I agree with Huntington’s other civilization classifications except in relation to Buddhism not constituting a civilization. Huntington does not give a strong or convincing argument in my opinion on why Buddhist civilization is not a civilization. He also contradicts himself when he says that Buddhism is not a civilization, but on a map in the book Buddhism is portrayed like it is one of the nine civilizations in the world (Huntington 26-27). I do believe under what Huntington classifies as what constitutes a civilization, there is a Buddhist civilization. Buddhist civilization has the major identifying religious characteristic of Buddhism, as well as other political and linguistic differences that make it unique from other civilizations. I would also go one step further than Huntington in saying that there is an African (mainly sub-Saharan Africa) civilization.

In my opinion Huntington does do a good job in pointing out that some countries have different civilizations within the same country that lead to the increased chance of conflict within that country and between those different civilizations. Countries that have these divisions are known as cleft countries, as India, Malaysia, Nigeria, Kenya and Tanzania are examples of cleft countries (Huntington 137). Huntington also points out effectively in the book in my opinion that areas where civilizations meet there is a greater chance of conflict between the civilizations that directly border or touch each other. This is one example of a fault line conflict with another example being one in which civilizations clash in a cleft country or when different civilizations try to form new states as the result of the collapse of a former state like in Yugoslavia (Huntington 207-208). Huntington also effectively talks about torn countries that try or consider redefining their civilizational identity but usually fail (Huntington 139). Russia, Turkey, Mexico, and Australia are the three states Huntington gives as primary examples (139, 144, 149, 151). I think Huntington does a great job in this section as each of these four states have considered changing their civilizational identity from Orthodox to Western in Russia, Islamic to Western in Turkey, Latin American to Western in Mexico, and Western to Sinic in Australia. However, none of these states have been able to change their civilizational identity as of the present day.

Out of the fault line conflict that occur between different civilizations, according to Huntington they occur the most between groups in Islamic civilization and groups in other cilvizations (208). One of the most contentious statements Huntington made in his book was that Islam had “Bloody Borders” (254). So Huntington is saying that Islamic civilization was the most violent prone civilization in the 1990’s. This may be a conversional statement; however, he backs it up with statistics and facts in his book. One of the statistics Huntington provides is that out of the twenty ethnopolitcal conflicts between civilizations from 1993-1994, fifteen or seventy-five percent of them involved a group in Islamic civilization (257). Islamic civilization also had a high number of intracivlizational ethnopolitcal conflict in that same time span, as eleven of the thirty conflicts involved groups within Islamic civilization (257).

Huntington talks about the multiple reasons in his book why Islamic civilization may be prone to more conflict than other civilizations. Some of these reasons Huntington talks about is militarism within Islam, high birth rates in Islamic civilization, an absence of a core state like India in Hindu civilization, and proximity to other civilizations (Huntington 263). Out of the major reasons Huntington talks about, he seems to believe that the high birth rate or demographic surge in Islamic civilization is a major reason, as a large population of young males in a society is a source of instability (265). According to Huntington this had led to high levels of violence within Islamic civilization and with non-Islamic civilizations; however, he believes that Islamic civilization violence could decline within the next few decades once the birth rate within the Islamic world drops (265). I agree with Huntington that the birth rate within Islam may be a factor in Islamic civilization being involved in a high percentage of conflicts; however, I think proximity which Huntington mentions is a major reason as well. Islamic civilization borders every other civilization in the world except Latin American. Latin American civilization only borders Western civilization in which it has shared characteristics with, so Latin American conflict in less likely. So due to geography, Islamic civilization may be prone to more conflict through no fault of their own because it has to come into contact with other civilizations that have their own interests.

Huntington may be tough on Islamic civilization; however, he is tough on Western civilization as well. Huntington talks about Western civilization not being the world’s most peaceful civilization either. Christianity has had a history of aggression during periods of history, as the Crusades is probably one of the biggest examples. Western civilization has also tried to impose their values, sometimes by force on other civilizations. Huntington also does a good job talking about in his book that Western civilization is still going to be powerful, just not as powerful as it used to be in a multipolar world order. Huntington does a real good job in pointing out that Western attempts to Westernize or Universalize the world have failed. Many countries today in other civilizations (especially Sinic) understand that they can modernize without having to Westernize.

I enjoyed reading Samuel Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. It is a book that raises important questions, provides valuable insights, and predictions about the post-Cold War world. Some of Huntington’s assertions have been proven right over time, while other have not (like Japan and China improving relations), and the jury is still out on some of his other assertions. While I do not agree with everything he asserts in the book, I do agree with Huntington that there is likely going to be increased conflict between civilizations. India or Hindu civilization is probably going to continue to have problems with Pakistan and other states in Islamic civilization. Also, Sinic, Orthodox (mainly Russia), Islamic, Hindu, Japanese, and Western are going to compete for influence in East Asia as well as Southeast Asia, which will likely lead to increased conflict. While Huntington points out these conflicts may not become major wars or World Wars, the increased power of multiple civilizations in the world will at least lead to more tension in global affairs.