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MYTH OR REALITY? INTER-CIVILIZATIONAL RIVALRY AND ITS RELATION TO FUNDAMENTALIST AND NATIONAL-LIBERATION MOVEMENTS

Abstract:

The inter-civilization rivalry has been discussed in geopolitical academic and popular forums for many decades. This article aims to systematize the discussion to date using selected examples. Two types of conflicts were chosen: religious and national liberation conflicts to clarify the disputes arising from the scholarly debate to date. As a result, the main assumptions of the theory of civilizational rivalry have been confirmed, but the possibility of the occurrence of phenomena in their essence opposite has also been pointed out. Therefore, one can further expect a fierce debate as to who is right.

Key words:

civilization, rivalry, fundamentalism, liberation, statelessness, nation

INTRODUCTION

The notion of civilization remains academically challenged. In the singular, civilization regards an advanced stage of development, a point of distinction between barbarity and cultural and material prosperity. In the plural, civilizations take on entirely different denotative and connotative qualities

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which themselves vary significantly. Some definitions directly imply the possibility of civilizations to create ideologically heterogeneous realities that can be antagonistic or complementary towards different units of the same kind (civilization as “a kind of moral milieu encompassing a certain number of nations, each national culture being only a particular form of the whole” (Durkheim and Mauss 1971). Others emphasize the tendency of political and ideological institutions to be shaped by cultural factors (“values, norms, institutions, and modes of thinking to which successive generations in a given society have attached primary importance” (Bozeman 1975)). All of these definitions are based on the premise that civilizations exist and have substantial influence on the behavior of primary actors on the international stage - states. Furthermore, essentialist approaches to civilizations consider them to be “homogeneous”, “unified”, “cohesive” whereas non-essentialist points of view use terms like “heterogeneous”, “loose”, “unstable” (Hall and Jackson 2007). This article is concentrated around the non-essentialist approach, acknowledging heterogeneity and permeability of civilizations. Homogeneity should not be confused with cohesion - cohesive civilizations, like the West, can be heterogeneous to a great extent. This diversity can and does lead to internal clashes originating from different, albeit similar, axiological foundations and policies anchored in them. On the other hand, permeability of civilizations, unavoidable in a XXIst century globalized world, leads to frequent inter-civilizational interactions and to alterations of societal fabrics (look at the European migration crisis and its implications for social structure of European states). Civilizational platforms, serving as “carriers of knowledge” (Hall 2007), establish and influence individual preferences in regard to cultural and political elements. In other words, they have a significant impact on policy-making and democratic mechanisms as they shape individuals’ worldview from the very beginning. This article is based on a synthesis of presented academic research and considers civilizations to be macro-cultural, macro-historical units of personal identification. They can be described as being transnational, artificially created and, most importantly, without a defined territory (Bettiza 2014). Even

though the aforementioned principle implicates a high degree of vagueness in terms of civilizations, their influence on the international framework is as tangible as ever. United Nations Alliance of Civilizations normatively confirms the existence of such entities while working to promote cultural diversity and mutual respect along civilizational lines. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), concentrating states belonging to the loosely-defined Islamic civilization, is a relatively significant actor on the international stage with permanent delegations to the United Nations and the European Union. The latter itself can be considered a prime example of coalescence of states with common axiological and economic bedrock and their positive dialogue. It is of paramount importance for the proper understanding of this article to clearly identify the approach of the work towards the highly contested topic of civilizations. The notion itself can be analyzed on three basic levels:

- socio-historical plane underlining the concept of civilizations as units of ontological character, closely linked with the essentialist approach;
- political plane which puts the emphasis on states' efforts to create and deepen the dichotomy between "them" (antagonistic civilizations) and "us" - it is worth noting that this approach is preferred by core states (actors which consider themselves to be the most powerful in a defined region) and can lead to inter-civilizational clashes;
- international perspective acknowledging the impact of civilizations on interstate relations and outlining the causes of its influence.

It is only when we abandon the non-essentialist approach and consider civilizations to be ontological, clashing entities that we can effectively "materialize" civilizations into reality (Katzenstein 2010). However, this approach has been widely disputed (especially regarding Samuel P. Huntington's civilizational theories) and will not be entertained in this article. Finally, many states are using the civilizational angle to frame foreign policy discourse and allow it to dictate (or heavily influence) the structure and character of interstate institutions. The prime example of this trend would be the United States during "the War on Terror" when high-ranking US officials used

the civilizational rhetoric extensively to provide legitimacy for their intervention in Iraq (the George W. Bush's "axis of evil" which was, at least in the eyes of the population, encompassing the Islamic civilization as a whole). This paper brings value through balancing neo-realist and constructivist approaches to International Relations (IR) and analysing, through the lens of aforesaid schools of thought, the impact of civilizations on states' interests and identities. It concentrates on a field of IR which still remains underdeveloped, attempting to determine factors driving actions of states, regardless of their relative power. The first part of this article focuses on civilizations and defining the nature of inter-civilizational rivalry itself. Firstly, it examines the impact of globalization on the materialization of inter-civilizational rivalry and its consequences for intra-civilizational matters. Secondly, it delves deeper into particular civilizations and shows how lack of cohesion, heterogeneity and varied interests lead to a situation where inter-civilizational cooperation, instead of rivalry, is possible while intra-civilizational competition intensifies. Lastly, it looks at how inter-civilizational issues transform civilizations from imaginary concepts into social facts - elements transcending individuals and governmental structures, created by individuals, alike. The second part uses the theoretical underpinning and defines its relationship with fundamentalist and national-liberation movements.

INTER-CIVILIZATIONAL RIVALRY IS A REALITY

The analysis of qualitative data suggests a propulsion of inter-civilizational rivalry by globalization (mainly its economic aspect) and intensification of inter-civilizational interactions' frequency and intensity. Why does the increased interconnectedness of the modern era increase the likelihood of the aforesaid phenomenon? Globalization, understood as a process resulting in increased volumes of interstate transfer of people, goods and ideas, tears down normative barriers that used to limit the scope of trade and cultural interactions. International organizations, like the United Nations (UN) or the World Trade Organization (WTO), dedicate enormous financial

and human resources to facilitate increases in the volume of international trade or to encourage regional intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) to do the same. On the economic plane, states gravitate towards prioritization of engaging in trade relations with their allies. The most stable alliances in turn are based on shared norms and values alongside particular interests of parties involved. This phenomenon creates a situation where, in general, members of the same civilization enjoy a closer relationship with ideologically similar countries. Therefore, states have a direct motivation to cooperate with their ideological brothers, underlining the separation of the civilizational bloc from different macro-cultural units. Due to the relative similarity of intra-civilizational norms, the potential of such cooperation is greater in the long-term in comparison to inter-civilizational alliances. Furthermore, markets that experience economic growth and are the most competitive globally constitute a significant source of hard power for benefiting countries. Increased economic power generates anxiety and challenges ambitions of other actors, the power of which has relatively decreased. However, states belonging to the same civilization are able to compete within shared structures or at least on the basis of a mutual foundation whereas the same is much harder to achieve on the inter-civilizational level. Therefore, it is evident that inter-civilizational rivalry is more likely to occur nowadays where the comparatively free flow of goods and services encourages competition. As a result, there is an increased probability of interactions between members of civilizations that may result in clashes. Clashes resulting from the desire of the most prominent members of civilizations to become superior, forming the inter-civilizational rivalry. This tendency is reinforced by inter-civilizational alliances, the nature of which was described earlier. As we can see states have a direct motivation to incorporate cultural values into, what is usually considered, a strictly realist calculus, supporting the constructivist approach towards the issue. The question remains however, are states ready to sacrifice their long-term interests in favor of short-term economic gains, originating from inter-civilizational interactions?

While the WTO “is seeking to encourage the revival of the complex links and networks involved in the trade finance market”, the UN has launched several initiatives aimed at achieving the same goal. The UN Conference on Trade and Development and agreements reducing trade barriers around the globe are prime examples of such actions. Regardless of these attempts to promote inter-civilizational trade, the majority of trade remains intra-civilizational in regions where this is possible. For example, in 2022 68% of Europe’s trade was intraregional (that is excluding the US and other members of the Western civilization) and the US exported ~700 bln USD worth of goods to Canada and Mexico alone (with China, the biggest non-Western US trading partner, this value was just ~154 bln USD). Nevertheless, “world trade volume today is roughly 44 times the level recorded in the early days of the GATT (4400% growth from 1950 to 2023)”. The turbulent nature of inter-civilizational relations is best exemplified by the axis Beijing-Washington. US exports to China in 2022 were 23% lower than the projected trend based on China's overall import growth from 2018-2022 - this trend is likely to continue with draconic tariffs announced by president-elect Donald Trump and a likely escalation of the current trade war. While it is true that these tensions constitute a response to the rise of China and its increasing threat to US interests in the South China Sea region, US interests would not be threatened in the first place had China been a liberal democracy, respecting international law. Axiological differences, manifesting themselves in antagonistic political systems, should be considered as underlying causes of this rivalry, supported by qualitative data. Moreover, when members of other civilizations start succeeding economically and attributing that success to their cultural or political superiority, it is very easy for non-revisionist powers to default to civilizational lines in an attempt to preserve the image of prosperity and success, deepening the dichotomy between “us” and “them”. The US former National Security Advisor John Bolton has suggested that the recent economic growth of China is a result of the effectiveness of the Chinese political system which in turn is based on elements characteristic to the Sinic civilization. This notion however has been rejected by the US government who seem to attribute

China's growth to unfair economic practices which were described by the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission as "predatory". This is a prime example of a scenario where a government of a core state of one civilization does not acknowledge the legitimacy of a success of a core state of a different civilization, increasing the inter-civilizational rivalry. Phenomena described above show how economic globalization increases the intensity and frequency of inter-civilizational interactions. They also illustrate the tendency of economic isolationism, especially in times of instability, which in a globalized world further propels inter-civilizational rivalry.

INTER-CIVILIZATIONAL COOPERATION IS ALSO A REALITY

At first glance it would seem that due to described phenomena inter-civilizational rivalry remains in the realm of imagination. From a realist perspective, in an anarchic environment states should prioritize self-preservation and strengthening their economic and political position while disregarding civilizational differences. It is only natural that different states have different, often antagonistic aspirations and prioritize achievement of their strategic objectives. It is also abundantly clear that states belonging to the same artificially derived civilization are not the same and often find a common ground with external states (belonging to a different civilization). One could argue that on an international stage cultural affiliation is of lesser importance than socio-economic prosperity and military power, leading to frequent intra-civilizational clashes and rendering inter-civilizational rivalry at best coincidental. The question remains, do tangible geostrategic interests muffle the civilizational divide or is their effect on government policy equalized by civilizational, cultural factors?

At first glance, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States appear to be unlikely allies. The stark differences between them are evident: one is a monarchy, the other a republic; one professes a commitment to human rights, while the other faces accusations of systematic and widespread

violations. Saudi Arabia, with a potential to become a core state of the Islamic civilization, enjoys a fruitful relationship with the US which encompasses over 300 joint ventures on an economic, diplomatic and military plane. To visualize, Saudi Arabia is a side to a 140 billion dollars Foreign Military Sales programme while the US imported an average of 439,000 barrels of petroleum per day from Saudi Arabia in 2023. Shared geostrategic interest expressed in the objective to contain Iran and deter it from escalatory foreign policy and to uphold a stable supply of oil to international markets ensured continued American support to the Arab state. Similarly, China and Russia have vastly divergent foundations of their political systems, different cultures and state philosophies, yet they remain closely allied. It is worth noting that Russia, as a core state of the Orthodox civilization, has not publicly acknowledged its asymmetric relationship with China, a core state of the Sinic civilization. Public humiliation for a “great power” being inferior to another is only exacerbated by its self-proclaimed cultural leadership. The grim reality of a relative power decline undermines the narrative of cultural supremacy of the Russian people, fueling the same narrative on the Chinese side. It is of paramount importance to see the relationship between Moscow and Beijing not only through the prism of politics or economics but also via the cultural lens. Regardless of aforesaid asymmetry and axiological differences, the total bilateral trade value exceeded 240 billion USD in 2022 while the two countries continued the pattern of security cooperation and called for “deeper strategic collaboration” (in the words of the Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun). It is quite clear that priority is attributed to geostrategic considerations, not cultural differences. We can see how lack of cohesion and the heterogeneity of civilizations allows for inter-civilizational alliances to form and withstand the test of time. The implications of aforesaid statements would undermine the validity of the thesis that inter-civilizational rivalry is a reality. However, is that the case? Does the presented line of argumentation withstand scrutiny?

Firstly, the aforementioned narrative sees the world through the lens of realism. It assumes that state actors prioritize their self-interest over anything else and that they are

ready to sacrifice their ethical or moral systems (stemming from a cultural underpinning) on behalf of tangible benefits. However, this is usually not the case. The United States have faced immense public scrutiny for their relationship with Saudi Arabia - American citizens do not look favourably on domestic politicians turning a blind eye to human rights violations in the broadly defined "Islamic civilization". This tendency significantly limits what the American government can do and how far it can go in regard to its partnership with Saudi Arabia, weakening this inter-civilizational alliance. Similar situation can be observed in Europe where the rivalry between the West and the Islamic civilization has only strengthened in recent years with anti-Arab sentiments spreading like wildfire throughout the continent. Any attempts to implement economic incentives for Arab (or African) migrants in European countries is currently tantamount to a political suicide as resentments, especially on the right side of the political spectrum, are particularly strong. What these two examples show us is that cultural (civilizational) differences are often too strong to allow for implementation of policies that would be the most beneficial for particular states. This line is complementary to the constructivist standpoint visualizing how core elements of state's identities prevail if they are challenged by short-term economic opportunities. Therefore, states have to (to a lesser or greater extent) sacrifice their *raison d'état* to satisfy their citizens, the source of legitimacy (in democratic states), which leads to an increased likelihood for the formation of inter-civilizational rivalries. Secondly, the narrative presented before does not take into account the nature of described relationships. Both of them lack a common, axiological foundation on which they could be based. Strategic objectives can shift relatively quickly as the system itself is anarchic and strongly dynamic. Without a semi-static bedrock, the artificial construction of a "strategic alliance" is highly fallible to fluctuations on the international stage. On the other hand, states belonging to the same civilization already have a basis for cooperation which can be harnessed to build lasting and durable partnerships. The bottom line is that alliances built on strategic interests can never achieve the depth of alliances built on common axiological foundations for reasons

described above. This phenomenon strengthens the tendency of states to coalesce around states from the same civilization, reinforcing inter-civilizational rivalries. As we can see, while inter-civilizational alliances exist and at times can be incredibly lucrative, they cannot compete with intra-civilizational alliances in the long term. Therefore, the formation of inter-civilizational rivalries is unavoidable.

FUNDAMENTALIST AND NATIONAL-LIBERATION MOVEMENTS

Fundamentalist movements form as a response to chaos, to a destruction or significant alteration of traditional social structures by a rapid introduction of secularism or modern political institutions. For the purpose of this article, they are defined as “the concept [...] used to describe a certain form of religious belief which is characterized by extremism and an inclination to violence” (Gbenenee 2018). They perform wide-range recruitment and attempt to fill the ideological void, often connected with the introduction of democracy. They answer, or pretend to answer, key human needs and embed their way of thinking into the host society. This is a commonality between fundamentalist and national-liberation movements. The latter mobilize the population by portraying themselves as addressing the need of self-determination, often creating relatively powerful bottom-up tendencies. These, sometimes destructive, centrifugal forces change the status quo, revise what is perceived to have been imposed. One civilization in particular considers itself to be entitled to an imposition of their axiological and political systems on others - the West. It should not surprise then that fundamentalist movements are often opposed to Western universalism which is simply perceived as a modern version of traditional imperialism. However, national-liberation movements are more likely to be antagonistic towards colonial or imperial governing institutions (typically Western) from which they are trying to liberate. Both of these movements use dissatisfaction of states' population with the status quo to advance their own particular objectives, targeting especially socio-economically vulnerable groups. Similarly,

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both of them gain legitimacy from deeply embedding themselves into fabrics of their civilizations (or states) and emphasizing their cultural distinctiveness. Fundamentalist movements achieve this through religious separation of their targeted population from religious frameworks of other civilizations, deepening inter-civilizational differences. National-liberation movements, understood as “non-state actors who are defined by their objective (self-determination)” (Mastorodimos 2017), tend to concentrate around three basic paradigms:

- ethno-cultural diversity of a social group, which leads to the gradual decay of legitimacy of political institutions governing it;
- major inter-civilizational differences along religious, cultural and political lines, fueling nationalistic tendencies within aforesaid groups;
- the imposition of foreign political, economic and cultural systems by actors perceived as colonial or imperialistic.

All of these notions are closely connected and should be treated complementarily. Firstly, this article will show how fundamentalist movements exacerbate inter-civilizational rivalries and exemplify it through terrorist organizations, Iran and the Taliban. Secondly, the analysis will shift to national-liberation movements and their *modus operandi*, focusing on the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Algerian National Liberation Front (NLF).

Fundamentalist movements deepen inter-civilizational divides, increasing the probability of rivalry formation. Inter-civilizational rivalry, as mentioned before, is based on socio-cultural and political imparities between these macro-cultural units. Fundamentalist movements derive their influence from religious norms which are unique to the regional environment. Furthermore, by their definition, they take the theoretical underpinning to an extreme, diversifying the religious system from similar frameworks in the region. As such, they create a self-propelling cycle of extremism, deepening the rift between individual states and, by extension, entire civilizations. Fundamentalist movements are inherently incompatible with inter-state dialogue and cooperation as they reject and attack axiological foundations of other states, especially belonging to different macro-cultural units. They then use this divide to

reinforce their own power through further radicalization of their bases and crafting a narrative about the inter-civilizational, unbridgeable differences. Therefore, inter-civilizational dialogue is not in the direct interest of fundamentalist movements, as defined by this article. Western universalism promotes the adoption of Western political and social systems by non-Western societies, often creating tensions within these populations. This tension arises as individuals struggle to reconcile foreign influences with their indigenous traditions and values, intensifying confusion over what constitutes their authentic cultural identity. This confusion directly leads to an increased popularity of fundamentalist movements which advocate for the return to traditional values and established or familiar social structures, provided that legitimacy for such actors remains strong. Globalisation, in its social aspect, strengthens this tendency through enabling fast and direct inter-communal flow of information, expediting the dissemination of fundamentalist views.

Religious fundamentalism is particularly widespread within the Islamic civilization. It derives its legitimacy from an established socio-religious system which, in this case, transcends political structures. The Sharia law and its extremist interpretations define jihad as “a salvific and purifying act with the ultimate goal of establishing a messianic caliphal state encompassing all Muslims” (Gbenene 2018). Further, Islamic fundamentalism (in the scope established by this article) provides a clear stratifying framework of civilizations and states belonging to them. Jihad is used by these groups to legitimize their war against “evil forces” with the motivation of spreading the values of Islam. By complete abandonment of a notion of inter-civilizational dialogue, the ground of inter-civilizational rivalry had been prepared and exploited by Al-Qaeda, Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and other fundamentalist movements. The Islamic Republic of Iran originates in a fundamentalist movement and has anchored its entire statehood in the values of Islam, asserting that the way of Islam is the only proper approach towards inter-state relations. With Iran’s constitution’s preamble beginning with words: “In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the

Merciful”, the normative foundation of the country could not be more clear. This normative plane is directly translated into reality and is reflected in Iran’s actions. President Hassan Rouhani, perceived as a politically moderate persona, had mentioned the idea of non-cooperation with non-Islam states in 60% of his speeches. This type of narrative builds obstacles on the way of potential future legislative efforts and deepens the inter-civilizational divide. Iran’s strong alignment with civilizational values, coupled with existing geopolitical tensions and other factors, hinders its ability to engage in potentially lucrative deals with major Western economic powers that fail to align with its civilizational framework, further supporting the constructivist perspective. However, the current political situation in Iran remains highly unstable with a high degree of bottom-down movements’ disturbances to the existing social and political structures. The research conducted by the Group for Analyzing and Measuring Attitudes in Iran (GAMAAN) provides reasonable grounds to believe that 81 percent of Iran’s literate adult population “does not want an islamic republic”. If that is the case, how can fundamentalist movements’ support be reinforced through exposure to foreign axiological systems, as claimed earlier? The premise of that claim was legitimacy. The Iranian Revolution and the Iranian government (in a short period of time after the Revolution) enjoyed widespread popular support. Their fundamentalism provided an ideological framework that clearly explained which actors are responsible for the disadvantageous economic situation and which values should be condemned. The post-revolutionary Iranian government managed to decrease its legitimacy through unsuccessful economic policies and chronic human rights abuses. The fundamentalist movement was strengthened by an attempted imposition of foreign values, attained legitimacy and then lost it through bad governance practices. The Taliban has experienced a similar trajectory during their operational period. Initially, the fundamentalist movement gained popular support for exhibiting staunch opposition to attempts of imposition of Soviet political and cultural norms during the 1979-89 Soviet-Afghan War. It portrayed itself as a savior of Afghani people from the subjugation to foreign values and an actor able to implement stability in the country ravaged by antagonistic

militias. The initial period of legitimacy was short-lived as the government failed to deliver on their promises, violated human rights and implemented brutal punishment for non-adherence to the religious normative system, ultimately resulting in its overthrow in 2001 by the US forces. As such, it is evident that fundamentalist movements deepen inter-civilizational divides.

National-liberation movements are a result of inter-civilizational rivalry while simultaneously reinforcing it. The main differentiating factor between national-liberation movements and secessionist movements is the anti-imperial or anti-colonial nature of the former. Denotative implication is that actors being colonized operate within a different political or economic framework than the colonizer - values (political or social) that have been imposed on the colonized entity are a target of a bottom-down revolution - a national-liberation movement. As such, it is evident that inter-civilizational rivalry contributes to the emergence of national-liberation movements, the question remains - to what extent is the aforesaid rivalry caused by them? As outlined before, national-liberation movements use the existing inter-civilizational differences to define themselves. These entities derive their power and popular support from positioning themselves in opposition to colonial or imperial power. To uphold their legitimacy, they have a direct interest in ensuring the existence of the civilizational divide and emphasizing their connection to socio-cultural structures characteristic to the region. Therefore, to ensure their survival, they aim to reinforce the inter-civilizational divide. However, it should be noted that the entire lifespan of national-liberation movements forms a cycle of self-assuring tendencies which strengthen the inter-civilizational rivalry - not only the initial operational period. Firstly, when national-liberation movements successfully take over political and economic institutions that had been established, they typically attempt to modify their governance framework, trying to align with their civilizational identity. In many cases this phenomenon manifests itself in similarization of aforementioned institutions in countries remaining in geographical proximity. Secondly, a former colonial power, faced with negative political consequences stemming from being defeated by an "inferior" political entity, cannot allow

itself (in most cases) to participate in mutually beneficial economic and diplomatic relationships, strengthening the rivalry further. Lastly, states belonging to uninvolved civilizations can use the opportunity created by the removal of hitherto influences to start to embed their own. Economically and politically, competing states belonging to different macro-cultural units use every opportunity to promote their geostrategic interests. When a power vacuum emerges in a region, it is often partially occupied by the national-liberation movement itself and partially by an external actor. It is of paramount importance to acknowledge that national-liberation movements are anti-colonial/anti-imperialist and are not, at least theoretically, inherently antagonistic to any macro-cultural unit. However, as described above, these movements are likely to be favorable towards creation of civilizational dichotomies due to their never-ending struggle for legitimacy. At least initially, this legitimacy can be provided by the fact of adherence to traditional, national norms in the first place.

PLO is a national-liberation movement, self-describing itself as representative of the Palestinian people. Its foundational document - the Palestine National Charter (adopted in 1964) - in its first article used inter-civilizational differences to clearly define its identity; "Palestine is an Arab homeland bound by strong Arab national ties to the rest of the Arab Countries and which together form the great Arab homeland" (Palestine National Charter 1964). In this context, "Arab national ties" are not only a carrier of cultural and national value but also reinforce the dichotomy between "Arab Countries" and "the rest" (in this case, the Western civilization). While Israel (supported militarily and politically by the West) has not been defeated, the state's conduct of the war has fallen short of swift achievement of military objectives. Furthermore, the escalation of the scope of the conflict has enabled external actors to attempt to embed their civilizational interests into the region. Iran has been engaged in direct military conflict with Israel for ~8 months, having been the main supplier of military and financial support for the "axis of resistance", i.e. Hezbollah and other military factions. The conflict which has arisen around this axis bears traits of inter-civilizational rivalry. While the PLO's representatives do not chant "death to America,

death to Israel”, other actors advocating for the liberation of Palestine do. Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis and many more have one thing in common - all of them are anti-American and anti-Western. Iran, using this inter-civilizational divide, perpetuates the cycle of inter-civilizational rivalry, hiding it under the veneer of national-liberation or the right of self-determination of nations.

PLO is just a contemporary example of a deep-rooted phenomenon. During the Algerian Civil War (1954-62), the NLF positioned itself as the organization that would ensure the long-desired right of self-determination for the Algerian people. It formed its identity around being anti-French, anti-colonial and, ultimately, anti-Western. After its identity had been formed and power seized from its former colonial overlords, the NLF firmly rejected formerly imposed civilizational norms and drifted towards the similarization of political institutions to their regional forms. Strong centralization of power, heavy emphasis on militarism and nationalism characterised the early post-colonial Algerian government that attempted to uphold its legitimacy in the eyes of the Algerian people. Nonetheless, the economic ties connecting France and Algeria remained as strong as ever - the latter found it to be undesirable to decouple from the large consumption market of France. However, the rift between these two states had been created and various influential actors aimed to capitalize on the strained Franco-Algerian relations. Russia (the core state of the Orthodox civilization), for instance, supplies 81% of weapons used by Algerian armed forces and has become one of the strongest allies of the Algerian government. The dichotomy created between Algeria and the West has enabled a third-party, Russia, to act as an important strategic partner of a government attempting to assert its position on the international stage. This realignment would not be possible without the civilizational rift which had been created as a result of decades of Western colonialism. As “Algeria’s historical non-interventionist, absolutist support for state sovereignty, and anti-Westernism allowed for alignment with Moscow” (Hill 2023), Algeria continues to be an embodiment of inter-civilizational rivalry on the basis of national-liberation past. Furthermore, the subsequent governments do not have

political capital necessary for any actions implicating a closer ideological, political or military relationship with the West. Since gaining independence, Algeria has harbored “deep skepticism and trepidation about the intentions of Western powers, especially France (its former colonizer) and the United States” (Hill 2023), a sentiment rooted primarily in its colonial past rather than any tangible contemporary factors. As a result, the inter-civilizational divide between Algeria and the West is likely to endure. This phenomenon is explicitly linked to the argumentative line of this article - while inter-civilizational economic cooperation exists and can be even described as strong, it lacks a common axiological foundation. Therefore, Algeria chooses to establish close military and political partnerships with states from different civilizations with the values of which it can align (even if only slightly).

CONCLUSIONS

This study underscores the relevance of incorporating a civilizational lens into the analysis of interstate relations, particularly in addressing the complexities of the 21st-century international arena. While acknowledging the multifaceted nature of global politics, the research highlights that "civilizational politics" offer a valuable supplementary framework. Although this approach is unlikely to emerge as the dominant paradigm for explaining state behavior, it provides a unique explanatory tool in instances where traditional theories prove inadequate. By adopting this perspective, scholars and policymakers may uncover nuanced dimensions of interstate interactions that might otherwise remain obscured. Future research should explore the conditions under which civilizational analysis yields the most explanatory power, thereby refining its applicability and integration within broader theoretical frameworks.

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