

Civilizing Through Transparency: The International Monetary Fund¹

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Empire does not think differences in absolute terms; it poses racial differences never as a difference of nature but always as a difference of degree, never as necessary but always as accidental.

Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 2000: 194

Introduction

“Civilization” has become a powerful and even dangerous word in international politics. Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* conjures up images of ancient and implacable cultural differences (Huntington 1996). George W. Bush’s appeal to “civilized nations” to join in the war on terror conveys a more singular notion of civilization while contrasting it with depictions of savagery and barbarism (Bush 2001, 2002). Such appeals to civilization evoke the rattle of distant sabers and the rumble of war. They depict a world divided.

Yet the language of civilization has also begun to appear in a rather different context and in a more hopeful tone. Recent statements by representatives of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have invoked the idea of civilization in their discussion of the goals of financial reform. In the aftermath of a decade of financial crises, IMF-backed proposals for reform promise to both civilize the market and spread the civilizing powers of globalization more widely. Here the emphasis is not on entrenched differences but rather on the possibility of overcoming them—of bringing the benefits of a civilized world economy to all.

These recent interventions present us with two very different conceptions of civilization. In Huntington’s conservative and pessimistic vision, civilizations are particular and exclusive. The IMF, on the other hand, invokes a more liberal and optimistic conception of civilization that is both inclusive and universal. Civilization is a word that contains profound tensions, gesturing to the past and the future, invoking

universality and profound difference, inclusion and exclusion, war and peace, fulfillment and exploitation. The dark and light sides of the idea of civilization have always coexisted uneasily in our vocabulary and in our politics. Many uses of the concept, moreover, draw on both simultaneously. George W. Bush's universalist appeal to a community of civilized nations, for example, depends for its clarity on its exclusion of those who would support the terrorists. Even the most universalist and optimistic conceptions of civilization must ultimately come to terms with the problem of the uncivilized.

Such ambiguities in the theory and practice of civilization have a long history. Over the past centuries both lofty ideals and naked interests have been wrapped in a language of civilization that has been at turns liberal and conservative, inclusive and exclusive, universalist and particularist. By the nineteenth century, the idea of civilization had been refined into a central tenet of international law: the standards of civilization. These standards sought to codify the criteria for membership in the “family of nations”—the privileged circle of those could enjoy the advantages of international law. They thus justified the inclusion of certain states, the exclusion of others, and the imposition of unequal treaties that guaranteed “civilized” states certain privileges in their dealing with those deemed less civilized. The standards of civilization were born of both a liberal universalist faith in the civilizing force of free trade and a more exclusive and conservative belief in the essential inequality of different cultures and races. They expressed the ideals of an era and codified the interests of European states. These standards thus defined an idea of civilization that drew on both its dark and light aspects.

This chapter examines contemporary parallels with the concept of “standards of civilization.” By returning to this earlier moment in the history of international politics, I seek to shed some light on the idea of civilization today. Specifically, I seek to understand what role this potent idea plays in recent IMF proposals for international financial reform. Together with the World Bank, the Fund has recently begun to introduce a wide range of universal standards in the areas of finance and macroeconomic management. These standards seek to define “good” economic behavior in a broad range of different areas. The fact that they are being justified in the name of “civilizing

globalization” suggests, though, that they are more than that—that they may in fact constitute a new definition of standards of civilization.

What could the centuries-old discourse of “standards of civilization” tell us about financial governance today? I will suggest that in spite of important differences, significant parallels do exist between then and now, both in the ideas and the interests that have helped to shape the concept of civilization. A philosophical commitment to the civilizing role of a free-market economy plays a crucial role in both nineteenth century and current conceptions of civilization. At the same time, both conceptions rely on a particular moral appeal to both civilizers and those who are to be civilized. Both discourses appear within the context of a globalizing world economy and help to foster the progress of globalization. Finally, both appeals to civilization bear the marks of power, working to the advantage of certain political interests and to the disadvantage of others.

This chapter begins by discussing the IMF’s recent talk of “civilizing globalization” in the context of proposals for reforming the international financial architecture, focusing in particular on the development of universal standards for good financial governance. I then explore the parallels and discontinuities between the past and the present. Ultimately, I will argue, recent proposals for international financial reform do in fact constitute an effort to impose a new set of standards of civilization. Moreover, the parallels between nineteenth century and contemporary ideas of civilization should be of some concern. This study suggests that the dark and light conceptions of civilization are not as separate as they first seem in current debates. While we may have long ago formally rejected as racist the distinctions between savage and civilized which underpinned nineteenth century standards of civilization, such implicit moral hierarchies continue to haunt current conceptions of economic civilization.

Civilizing globalization

While they were a creature of the nineteenth century, the standards of civilization did survive well into the twentieth century in various forms. After World War I, the League of Nations set conditions on the recognition of certain states. Various treaties also

ensured that states like Czechoslovakia, Poland, Austria and Hungary protected minorities and guaranteed foreigners' freedom of transit and commerce (Hall 1924: 61-63). Thus over time, more nations were included in the family of nations, if often with conditions attached. At the same time, extra-territorial provisions were gradually weakened in Siam, Turkey and elsewhere. While China appealed to have its extra-territorial provisions lifted in the 1920s, the unequal treaty was only finally abrogated in 1942 after the bombing of Pearl Harbour (Hall 1924: 61; Gong 1984: 161). In fact, it was the experience of World War II that finally signaled the decline of the idea of standards of civilization. In the aftermath of the war, the growing global movement for decolonization condemned the standards as Eurocentric and imperialist. Meanwhile, Europeans were forced to come to terms with their own capacity for inhumanity. The Holocaust, the bombing of Dresden, Hiroshima and Nagasaki: all raised serious doubts about the west's claim to civilizational superiority. The language of standards of civilization thus slipped out of our political vocabulary.

Has the idea of standards of civilization been resurrected today? Jack Donnelly has suggested that its clearest modern equivalent is the movement for human rights. He suggests that the exclusive concept of civilization central to nineteenth century standards has given way to a more inclusive and positive conception (Donnelly 1998). While the parallels that Donnelly points out are persuasive, they only tell part of the story. The nineteenth century standards of civilization possessed a very important economic dimension, both in their conception and in their implementation. If we are to look for contemporary parallels, we should therefore pay some attention to economic ideas and policies to see whether the idea of standards of civilization has reemerged.

In fact, we can find a parallel concept in contemporary debates about the reform of international economic governance. In the aftermath of the financial crises of the past decade, financial leaders, policymakers and scholars have all sought to develop a plan for reforming the international financial system. For their part, the IMF's representatives have developed a program that hinges on the introduction of new international standards with which all states should comply. The reappearance of the idea of universal standards has been discussed elsewhere (Eichengreen 1999; Kenen 2001; Gong 2002). What has not been noted, however, is the extent to which this return to standards has been framed

explicitly in civilizational terms (cf. Fidler, 2000). In different ways, several of the major IMF figures have turned to the language of civilization to characterize and justify the proposed changes to the financial governance.

We can find the most comprehensive vision of standards of civilization in the speeches of Michel Camdessus. It was Camdessus who, towards the end of his tenure as Managing Director of the IMF, first championed the idea of universal standards. In a series of speeches and press conferences in 1998 and 1999, Camdessus presented these standards in the language of civilization, calling on the international community to help in the task of “civilizing globalization” (Camdessus 1999c). What is the idea of civilization implicit in his vision for a reformed financial system? At one level, it is an international conception. Thus Camdessus calls on states “to do at a world level what each of our countries has done during the last century: to establish order, discipline, and civilization, if I may say so, in the working of our domestic markets” (Camdessus 1998). The international economy must become a “civilized environment” to enable the free and secure flow of goods and capital around the world. The single most important strategy for achieving this civilized global market, moreover, is the introduction of “universally accepted rules and standards” (Camdessus 1999c).

What are these new standards that provide the hallmarks of a “civilized” economy? In the words of the current Managing Director, Horst Köhler, they define “sound economic and financial policies and corporate governance” (Köhler 2001). Together with the World Bank, the Fund has so far developed standards to cover twelve different areas of economic governance, ranging from accounting practices through banking regulation to guidelines for fiscal and monetary policy (IMF 2000, 2001). The development of these specific standards is embedded in a broader discussion of what have variously been called the “basic principles” of good economic governance or “good housekeeping practices,” which include a much wider range of political economic norms (Larsen 2002; Goldstein 1999). These advocates for financial reform paint a very detailed picture of the kind of national economy that they would like to create: it will be tough on inflation, maintain a floating exchange rate, move aggressively on trade and financial liberalization and, above all, limit the role of the state in the economy (Larsen 2002; Goldstein 1999; Eichengreen 1999). This, it appears, is the contemporary model of a civilized economy.

To these concrete standards, contributors to this discussion often add a more subjective dimension, pointing to the need to change the culture of finance. Thus both US Federal Reserve Board Chairman, Alan Greenspan, and Camdessus contrast the bad old days of “crony capitalism” when governments retained close relationships with financial institutions and corporations and the new era of universal, standardized rules and practices (Greenspan January 30, 1998 1998 1998 1998; Camdessus 1999a). In spite of the fact that crony capitalism is alive and well in the Anglo-Saxon world, this term is consistently used to characterize a particular economic culture—the Asian model of capitalism which involves a much more central economic role for the state than is standard in either Britain or the United States.² This appeal to an international strategy for civilizing the global market thus appears to have a particularly western inflection. Moreover, it becomes clear on closer examination that the Fund’s attempts to civilize the *global economy* actually require civilizing certain *particular national economies*. In a comment on the progress made to date, Camdessus suggests,

what we are seeing in many countries, is an improvement in governance, and the establishment of transparent, *arm’s length* relationships among governments, corporations, and financial institutions, as are typical of *mature*, dare I say, *civilized* markets (Camdessus 1999b, emphasis added)

It is thus not only the international environment that must be civilized, but also, crucially, certain immature and uncivilized national economies who retain a too-close relationship between the state and the economy. What is the model upon which they should model themselves? This is clearly set out in the universal standards that, in Camdessus’s words, “build on and offer the potential to globalize the standards that exist within the most *advanced* nations” (Camdessus 1999c, emphasis added).

A return to standards of civilization?

These recent statements suggest uncanny echoes of a much earlier attempt to civilize the global economic and political order. Yet, such resonances do not in themselves adequately establish the parallels between then and now. If we are to understand the similarities and differences between these two appeals to the standards of civilization, we need to take a closer look at the context within which the contemporary discourse has emerged.

The intellectual context

The intellectual context within which nineteenth century standards of civilization emerged combined several very different strands of thought. Chief among them was a liberal economic belief in civilizing effects of trade which drew inspiration from Montesquieu's suggestion that "Commerce . . . polishes and softens (*adoucit*) barbarian ways as we can see every day" (cited in Hirschman 1978: 60). A second influential intellectual current was the conservative moral conviction that the existence of a hierarchy of civilizations created for the civilized states a moral responsibility to treat empire as "a sacred trust" that was not to be abused (Pagden 2001). These liberal and conservative ideas combined with a new positivist certitude regarding the scientific laws of the world, be they economic, legal or racial (Alexandrowicz 1973; Hall 1924; Lorimer 1883; Foucault 1970). This was a conception of civilization whose imaginative power was not diminished by its internal tensions—as inclusive and exclusive, historical and essentialist, light and dark conceptions of civilization all helped shape the standards of civilization.

In spite of the many years that separate us from the nineteenth century, we are nonetheless very much its intellectual heirs. It should not therefore come as a surprise that there are important parallels in the philosophical strands that inform the idea of civilization then and now. One of the most obvious of these is the central role of liberal political thought and *laissez-faire* economic theory and practice. While the nineteenth century faith in the value of free market economics underwent a serious beating during the Great Depression and the early post-war years, it has regained much of its former glory in economic and political circles in the past two decades (Best 2005, 2003a). Adam Smith and David Ricardo are once again the first names in a canon of economic theory that represents the discipline as a gradual refinement of the insight into the value of free-market society.

At the heart of contemporary new-classical economic theory is a conviction in the benefits of liberalizing economic relations—of significantly reducing national controls on international trade, finance and investment (Best 2003a; Grabel 2000). In international finance, this conviction takes the form of a belief in the universal gains to be achieved by liberalizing finance, and thus eliminating controls over the movement of capital around

the world (Eatwell 1997). While recent IMF proposals to reform financial governance have sought to mitigate some of the more destabilizing effects of this process, the liberalization of finance still remains the cornerstone of their vision of international economic governance and their efforts to implement it through the development of international standards. A belief in the social as well as economic value of a free market society links past and present conceptions of the standards of civilization. Fund proposals not only seek to civilize the global economy but also to use the process of globalization as a tool for spreading civilization, echoing the Enlightenment commitment to the civilizing power of commerce.

I have used the terms “conviction” and “belief” to characterize the current dominant approach to *laissez-faire* economics. I have done so deliberately, in order to both highlight the strength of the attachment and to underline its moral dimension. I have pointed elsewhere to the increasingly explicit moral character of the debate on financial governance (Best 2003b). Here, I will simply emphasize the idea of civilization implicit in those moral arguments. Horst Köhler, the current Managing Director of the IMF, is the most expansive in his articulation of the moral vision of the Fund, which he has outlined in numerous speeches (Köhler 2002, 2003c, 2003b, 2003a). In describing the ethical principles that he believes should shape global financial governance, Köhler emphasizes two central concepts: solidarity and self-responsibility. The duty of solidarity, he suggests, obliges affluent states to help those less fortunate by increasing development assistance and reducing trade barriers. The duty of self-responsibility, on the other hand, obliges poor states to take ownership of their own recovery and reform.

These are clearly very different moral duties from those of noblesse oblige and obedience invoked by nineteenth century moralists. The idea of self-responsibility emphasizes the capacity of underdeveloped nations to reform their own economies, whereas the nineteenth century concept of a “sacred trust” assumed that only advanced nations could initiate the process of civilization. Yet a whiff of paternalism still lingers around the Fund’s idea of global ethics. For while poor nations bear responsibility for self-improvement, they are not necessarily trusted with the power to determine the nature of this reform. Theirs is the task of implementing the universal standards of a civilized economy. The responsibility for defining those standards still rests primarily with “the

most advanced nations” (Camdessus 1999c). I began this chapter with a quote from Hardt and Negri on the ways in which contemporary global politics “poses racial differences never as a difference of nature but always as a difference of degree, never as necessary but always as accidental” (Hardt and Negri 2000: 194). The same logic is at work in new standards of civilization: a state’s place on the ladder of civilization may be accidental rather than inevitable, but its economic values and practices are still judged and treated accordingly.

Just as *laissez faire* liberalism and moral conviction form part of the intellectual context of both nineteenth century and contemporary versions of the standards of civilization, so too does scientific positivism. The twentieth century witnessed the entrenchment of positivist epistemology in the social sciences. Nowhere was that trend more evident than in the field of economics. While positivist economics, with its assumption of the law-like regularity of the economy and of the rationality of the economic agent, provides the foundation for all Fund policies it has found a particular expression in the articulation of universal standards in the idea of transparency. In Michel Camdessus’ words, “There is a strong consensus for making transparency the ‘golden rule’ of the new international financial system” (Camdessus 1999c). In the past few years, the term transparency has become ubiquitous in international financial circles where it is defined as adequate information.³ The cause of the recent financial crises, particularly the Asian crisis, it is argued, was a lack of transparency. Crony capitalism, impenetrably complex economic practices, insufficient surveillance, poor data—all combined to starve the markets of adequate information, a failing that they ultimately punished with financial crisis.

Transparency is a positivist concept *par excellence*. It assumes that knowledge can be rendered transparent—stripped of all interpretive ambiguity, cultural context and uncertainty. The ideal of transparency reflects two related kinds of positivist conviction: it reveals a faith in the perfect representability of all economic and political truths; at the same time, it demonstrates a kind of market fundamentalism which assumes that the market itself will be capable of accurately processing all such information. Together, these two assumptions promise a world in which perfect information combines with an efficient market to produce optimal global economic conditions.⁴ The promise of

transparency and the goal of universal standards are intimately connected. The possibility of transparent knowledge ensures that international standards can be unambiguously defined and measured. In turn, many of these standards seek to ensure greater political economic transparency—by imposing uniform standards of fiscal, monetary, banking and accounting practice.

While the contemporary conception of universal standards thus shares with the nineteenth century a profoundly positivist worldview, it does not share that era's scientific justifications of racial inequality. The positivism of transparent economics assumes the equal rationality of all economic agents regardless of their origins. All are equally capable of functioning in a civilized economic environment; the problem of incivility lies with faulty institutions rather than with a failure of human nature. Yet, while the Fund thus rejects an essentialist conception of economic civilization, it nonetheless does buy into a kind of civilizational hierarchy. Fund representatives assume that there is only one form of economic civilization and one path for reaching it. Different forms of political economic organization are thus defined as earlier stages in a process of civilization rather than as different political choices.⁵

The fact that this conception of economic civilization represents a kind of cultural hierarchy is concealed in part by the appeal to the universal value of transparency. Yet transparency is not an absolute concept. It is always partial and incomplete, relative and relational (Best 2005: Ch. 6). And it depends on specific contexts of communication and conventions of understanding. In this case a few major states have decided the conventions upon which to build a more transparent form of communication, and have based them on western economic norms and practices. In spite of their historical and cultural specificity, these standards are represented as universally valid. Yet they impose an unequal burden on economies, requiring some to conform to the norms of others, sometimes at great cost in financial and political terms. Such costs, if they are acknowledged at all, are justified as necessary for the progress towards a universal goal—membership in that most charmed of circles, the “club of countries with mature financial systems” (Eichengreen 1999: 50).

The intellectual context in which contemporary economic standards have evolved thus reveals some provocative parallels with the nineteenth century. Then and now we

find a combination of free market idealism, a certain moral conservatism and a claim to authority based on scientific positivism. Linking them all is a conception of civilization that combines an appeal to universality and a hierarchy of differences.

The practical context

Perhaps the most striking parallel in the practical contexts within which the two standards of civilization emerged is the fact that both eras were in the thrall of globalization. In the nineteenth century, the British Empire relied on the standards of civilization to both impose and legitimize its interests, as formal imperialism was increasingly supplemented by an informal empire built on “free trade imperialism” (Wood 1983; Robinson and Gallagher 1981). The combined logic of civilization and empire was no more evident than in the Treaty of Nanking of 1842, signed after the Opium War, which the British fought in order to gain access to Chinese markets, and justified in the language of civilization. Writing shortly after the signing of the Treaty of Nanking, Lord Palmerston noted:

There is no doubt that this event, which will form an epoch in the progress of the civilization of the human races, must be attended with the most important advantages to the commercial interests of England (cited in Greenberg 1969: 214-15).

Of course, the form that economic globalization took then and now is different: the British Empire cast a long shadow over the nineteenth century’s economic expansion. Yet the processes of informal empire that emerged in the nineteenth century do share certain concrete similarities with contemporary forces for globalization. Both have sought to legitimize globalization by linking globalization to the idea of civilization.

In practical terms, the introduction of universal standards has provided considerable support for the current process of economic globalization. The standards themselves help to both widen and deepen the integration of the global economy. Like their nineteenth century precursors, these standards facilitate international trade and investment by making “advanced” economic rules and practices the norm. The current appeal to universal standards can also be understood as a response to some of the difficulties that the process of economic globalization has encountered, both technical and political. The financial crisis of the 1990s posed serious technical challenges to the goal of economic

globalization: large-scale financial instability is anathema to the global spread of investment and trade. The new international standards are intended to significantly reduce instability by clarifying existing rules, creating new ones, and imposing them consistently around the world.

At the same time, these universal standards—and the moral discourse within which they are presented—are designed to respond to the critics of globalization and financial liberalization.⁶ These new standards, it is argued, will alleviate the difficulties that developing and emerging economies have encountered in their efforts to liberalize finance—most notably the massive financial crises that they have faced. The problem, Fund representatives suggest, lies not with the process of liberalization itself, but rather with the weakness of the underlying domestic institutions and practices. By civilizing globalization through the introduction of new rules and standards, poorer countries will now also be able to enjoy the benefits of globalization.

Like their nineteenth century counterparts, these standards work to support, to stabilize and to justify the progress of a particular model of economic globalization. In doing so, they also work to advance certain interests over others. The interests aligned behind the current push for financial liberalization may not be as starkly evident as those who sought the expansion of the British Empire in the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, despite claims to the contrary, there is considerable evidence to suggest that some have benefited far more than others from the process of globalization. In his analysis of the impact of financial liberalization on developing economies, John Eatwell concludes that poorer countries have witnessed few of the beneficial capital inflows that were promised, while suffering from the deflationary bias and instability caused by financial liberalization (Eatwell 1997).⁷ The former World Bank Chief Economist, Joseph Stiglitz, suggests that the current emphasis on liberalization not only disadvantages less developed economies but also actively serves the interests of the international financial community—rather than of the global economy as a whole (Stiglitz 2002: Ch. 8). Some would argue in response that the current move to reform international financial governance—including the development of international standards—is designed precisely to mitigate such inequalities by creating a “level playing field” with clear rules and regulations.

Yet such arguments hinge on the assumption that these standards are politically neutral, thus begging the question of the role of power in this new pursuit of a civilized global economy. We have certainly come a long way from the gunboat diplomacy of the nineteenth century when unequal treaties were the normal means of imposing the standards of civilization. These new international economic standards have been designed and introduced by an international organization, not a collection of imperialist states. They are also voluntary codes: a country may gain certain advantages by following them but is not formally penalized for not doing so. The brutality of power exercised a century ago in the imposition of standards of civilization is not evident today. Yet, parallels do still exist. For when we take a closer look at the international politics of the nineteenth century, it becomes clear that power imbalances often took on subtler forms.

The informal imperialism of nineteenth century Britain relied in part on the asymmetries of economic interdependence: a state's dependence on British loans or on access to their markets could just as easily provide leverage as the formalities of an unequal treaty (Robinson and Gallagher 1981: xix). Furthermore, even in the cases where treaties did play a crucial role, they were often only implicitly unequal. As Jack Donnelly points out, Article I of the Treaty of Nanking granted equal rights to British citizens in China and Chinese citizens in Britain. "China's profound lack of interest in obtaining such rights," he notes, "was conveniently overlooked, and extraterritoriality was justified by appeals to 'reciprocal' enjoyment of 'universal' minimum standards of legal fairness" (Donnelly 1998: 7).

Similar claims today regarding the reciprocity of the international financial system and the fairness of the new standards should also be treated with a measure of caution. While the ideal of a level playing field is a noble one, in this instance it is rather misleading. The many different economies that make up in the global order are certainly not equal. The vast discrepancies that divide the poorest from the richest have created structural inequalities in which deteriorating terms of trade, chronic poverty and escalating debt increase the asymmetries of interdependence. Such countries often have little real freedom to choose or refuse to follow "voluntary" codes. Such subtler forms of power are also reinforced by more blunt tools of coercion. Increasingly, the conditions

for IMF funding include requirements to reform domestic institutions along the lines proposed by the international standards. There has also been some talk of late within the Fund and World Bank of making the adoption of standards mandatory, which would further blur the line between power and persuasion.⁸ However level the playing field may appear, some states have set the rules of the game, while others are being required to adapt to them.

By examining the contemporary call for international financial standards in the light of what we know of the nineteenth century appeal for standards of civilization, we are better able to understand both the intellectual and the practical logics at work today. Much has clearly changed between then and now. The moral character of the argument for standards has dropped its overt paternalism, while the idea of scientific racism has been rejected (cf. Hobson chapter). The role of power in the imposition of universal standards has also altered, relying more on subtle and systemic imbalances. Yet, the presence of these few differences makes the parallels all the more striking. Both attempts to define standards of civilization have been driven by a liberal political economic vision that equates free-market globalization with civilization. Both ideas of civilization have also contained an important illiberal dimension that assumes the superior capacity of certain western nations to define, impose and measure the standards of civilization.

Conclusion

In a recent press briefing, the current IMF Deputy Managing Director, Anne Krueger reveals her conception of the link between globalization and civilization when she suggests that she is bewildered by some of the critics of globalization, given its clear and universal benefits:

And I guess, on the one hand, those who really want to claim that they would like to stay with their ancient or their old culture and civilization and old standards of living and old standards of illness and illiteracy, et cetera, that's their choice. But that's not what most of the people in the world are choosing, and in that sense, what worries me mostly is that there are people who say they are anti-poverty, et cetera, who also say they're anti-globalization (Krueger 2001).

While the word civilization only appears once in this passage, the concept actually figures twice, in different forms: once understood as particular, traditional cultures which

resist the progressive force of globalization and once as a more universal force of progress which is synonymous with globalization. The Fund's vision of international economic governance promises the second more universal concept of civilization, but ultimately relies on the first as a foil—not unlike their nineteenth century predecessors.

Krueger's remark is a response to a question about the clash of globalizations thesis. In fact, one could read the Fund's turn to the language of civilization as an attempt to respond to Huntington: their more optimistic and universalist appeal to the civilizing power of globalization ultimately seeks to trump Huntington's particularistic civilizations. Yet as Krueger's remarks reveal, the Fund also relies on a Huntingtonian conception of traditional civilizations as a way of explaining resistance to globalization. The fact that she can only understand dissent and debate by identifying them with "backwards" civilizations and does not envision a central role for them in the construction of a new global civilization is cause for concern.

Civilization remains a dangerous concept. I initially invoked its danger in the introduction to this paper in the context of Huntington's pessimistic conception of a clash of civilizations. Yet this danger is all the more pressing in the context of the IMF's more optimistic vision of a unifying global civilization because its optimism conceals its darker side. Those who seek to introduce these new economic standards reject the racist essentialism of the nineteenth century for a conception of economic civilization to which all can aspire. Yet they have introduced a different kind of fundamentalism through their insistence on a singular and absolute model of economic civilization. In their vision of a more civilized global economy, Fund representatives have also rejected the exclusiveness of the earlier approach to standards of civilization, promising instead the possibility of a universal civilization built on the progressive force of economic globalization (see Bowden, 2004). Yet contemporary economic standards remain gate-keeping mechanisms, separating the civilized from the uncivilized and placing them in a hierarchy of evolution. Inclusion, meanwhile, is deferred into the future for those who are too low on the ladder of progress and therefore have yet to qualify for membership. The Fund's universalist conception of civilization is still haunted by the problem of the uncivilized. We are witnessing a return to the idea of standards of civilization in the form of a call to civilize the global economy. Yet, if we have learned anything from the experiences of the

nineteenth century, it is that such claims to civilize should be made very cautiously, if at all.

Notes

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- ² For a discussion of the power of crony capitalism in the US, see: (Surowiecki 2002) On the Asian model of development, see: (Evans 1989; Singh 1999; Wade and Veneroso 1998)
- ³ For example, a search for the word "transparency" reveals that 5034 of 16337 documents on the IMF website use the word (www.imf.org - 14 April, 2005).
- ⁴ The idea of transparency can thus be understood as a correlative to the Efficient Markets Hypothesis.
- ⁵ This logic of cultural hierarchy is particularly evident in a recent book by Barry Eichengreen: (Eichengreen 1999) For a discussion of its moral logic, see: (Best 2003b)
- ⁶ These critics include anti-globalization protesters, non-governmental organizations such as OXFAM and Jubilee Research, as well as critical scholars such as: (Germain 2000; Eatwell and Taylor 2000; Michie and Smith 1999; Scholte and Schnabel 2002; Stiglitz 2002)
- ⁷ On the destabilizing effects of liberalization, see also: (Williamson and Mahar 1998)
- ⁸ Negotiations for standby agreements with Ecuador, Ghana and Brazil in recent years have included references to ROSCs. Rodrigo Rato, the new Managing Director of the IMF, has also suggested that the Fund consider linking a country's access to Fund resources to their adherence to standards and codes (Rato 2004; Schneider 2003; 'Report 2003)

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