

ESSAY

The Real Threat: An Essay on Samuel Huntington

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Examining the most recent book by Samuel Huntington, *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America's National Identity*, raises a question that applies to similar publications, like *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* by Charles Murray: How should such books be reviewed? *Who Are We?* is one of a small number of volumes that look like works of social science and have the appearance of scholarship but actually appeal to, reinforce, and help to legitimate one form of prejudice or another. Some of these works, we shall see, "merely" agitate against democratic forms of government; others reflect various anti-feelings—anti-Black, Mexican (and more generally immigrants), or Muslim (and more generally foreigners)—just as certain films seem at first glance to be works of art but actually appeal to prurient interests. Should one treat such works the way one treats any other serious book? Ignore them altogether, as one ought to treat the ruminations of Holocaust deniers? Or examine them mainly as ideological tracts?

David Brooks points out in his humorous but insightful book *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* that one way to make it in our public intellectual life is to be dead wrong. Then, he says, scores of people will write essays and present lectures explaining why you are in grievous error. Your books will sell like hot cakes. And your next one will be promoted with extra diligence by a keen publisher. Above all, your misbegotten message will receive extensive public airing. This (Brooks does not note) is especially true if the work plays to one or more widely held prejudices, especially those that people usually refrain from speaking about. Such books are extra-popular because they give license to the expression of silently embraced prejudices by claiming that they have a base in scholarship and even science. However, if such works were roundly ignored

instead of dissected, would these prejudices be held at bay? To respond to these questions, an examination of Huntington's work is useful indeed.

The theme that runs throughout various works of Huntington is best characterized as a theory of fear. His books typically identify a mounting threat, such as Mexican immigrants, Islamic civilization, or democratic proclivities, and then point to the need for strong national-unity building measures and mobilization of the people (including militarization) in response to the barbarians at the gates, if not already in the gates. Sometimes, the argument is formulated in basically analytical terms: If the required vigorous responses to the particular challenge at hand are not forthcoming, various calamities will ensue (e.g., the U.S. will lose a large part of its territory to Mexico and its Anglo-Protestant identity will be undermined) that implicitly call for stronger countermeasures. In other cases, an advocacy for powerful antidotes is quite explicit. As Huntington puts it in the Foreword to *Who Are We?*, he is writing as a patriot and a scholar, in that order.

Taken on its own, the threat-response thesis is unproblematic—a correlation the validity of which even people without social training can readily discern, and one that has often been repeated in the annals of social analysis. When the Nazis were about to overrun Britain, that country suspended habeas corpus. And few, even among the strongest supporters of Israel, would deny that while continuous threats from armed neighbors and terrorists and the various responses to them have helped to keep the segments of Israeli society together, they have also involved a measure of militarization of the nation and imposed limits on various civil rights.

The key issue then is to determine whether a nation truly faces particular threats

or whether such concerns are largely drummed up if not totally manufactured—say, in order to keep a nation under the control of one power elite or another and to make its citizens accept various governmental measures that they otherwise would not tolerate. These measures might include the curtailment of rights, economic belt-tightening, and discrimination against foreigners, among others. It is a familiar issue, seen for example in the debates over whether or not Saddam actually possessed nuclear weapons that could pose an imminent threat to the United States. Even more recently, it has been witnessed in the argument of whether or not Social Security is indeed in “crisis.” We must ask: If the various threats are *real* what is their magnitude? And if the dangers are vastly exaggerated, what purposes are served by such a politics of fear?

In *Who Are We?*, Huntington argues that immigrants, especially those from Mexico, are undermining the “Anglo-Protestant creed,” destroying the shared identity that makes us Americans. These immigrants do so by refusing to assimilate, to learn English, and to become American citizens and by maintaining a segregated society centered on un-American values. According to Huntington, it is not entirely the Mexicans’ fault; it is also the doing of liberal policies. He writes:

In the late twentieth century, developments occurred that, if continued, could change America into a culturally bifurcated Anglo-Hispanic society with two national languages. This trend was in part the result of the popularity of the doctrines of multiculturalism and diversity among intellectual and political elites, and the government policies on bilingual education and affirmative action that those doctrines promoted and sanctioned. The driving force behind the trend toward cultural bifurcation, however, has been immigration from Latin America and especially from Mexico. (Huntington 2004: 221)¹

Huntington argues that if this development is allowed to continue, it may lead to a profound breakup of the nation, or as he posits, “The possibility of a de facto split between a predominately Spanish-speaking America and English-speaking America . . . with . . . a major potential threat to the cultural and possibly political integrity of the United States” (ibid. p. 243). However, Huntington’s concerns go beyond the mere threat of a linguistically, culturally, and politically fractured American society. He ultimately fears that Mexicans might grab a large part of the United States: “No other immigrant group in American history has asserted or has been able to assert a historical claim to American territory. Mexicans and Mexican-Americans can and do make that claim” (ibid. p. 229). He later writes, “Mexican-Americans, in turn, argue that the Southwest was taken from them by military aggression in the 1840s, and that the time for *la reconquista* has arrived. Demographically, socially, and culturally that is well under way” (ibid. p. 246).

Huntington often resorts to the device not of advocating a particular course of action but of claiming to predict that it may take place (or, is one of the major options that the nation faces). This technique enables nativist sentiments to be voiced and anti-immigrant policies to be put forth, while the author can maintain that he is merely reporting the possible or likely outcomes of ignoring the dangerous threat posed by immigration. Thus, Huntington writes:

[T]he various forces challenging the core American culture and Creed could generate a move by native white Americans to revive the discarded and discredited racial and ethnic concepts of American identity and to create an America that would exclude, expel, or suppress people of other racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. Historical and contemporary experience suggest that this is a highly probable reaction from a once dominant ethnic-racial group that feels threatened by the rise of other groups. It could pro-

¹ Books by Samuel Huntington cited: Samuel P. Huntington. 2004. *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America’s National Identity*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

———. 1957. *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

duce a racially intolerant country with high levels of intergroup conflict. (ibid. p. 20)

Indeed, Huntington sees this as already beginning to happen. Pointing to some local meetings, op-eds, and other such sociological trivia, Huntington concludes (without discernable regret), “The makings of serious white nativist movements and of intensified racial conflict exist in America” (ibid. p. 315). The reader should pause here and reexamine the last sentence because it is vintage Huntington. He points to a threat that has not developed in order to generate support for what he holds ought to be done.

What course then does Huntington believe ought to be followed in order to avoid the nativist backlash that he envisioned? Although he does not say so explicitly, Huntington insinuates that immigration from Mexico should end—a solution that he seems to think could lead to the resolution of many of America’s problems. Indeed, he considers this possibility at some length, writing that “The possibility of a de facto split between predominately Spanish-speaking America and English-speaking America would disappear, and with it a major potential threat to the cultural and possibly political integrity of the United States” (ibid. p. 243). Above all, Huntington posits, one and all

should recommit themselves to the Anglo-Protestant culture, traditions, and values that for three and a half centuries have been embraced by Americans of all races, ethnicities, and religions and that have been the source of their liberty, unity, power, prosperity, and moral leadership as a force for good in the world. (ibid. p. xvii)

Fostering unity and suppressing differences would also be greatly helped by putting the nation on war-footing. According to Huntington, the collapse of the Soviet Union removed an external threat through opposition to which America derived a major source of identity: “The end of the Cold War deprived America of the evil empire against which it could define itself” (ibid. p. 11). Al Qaeda, he writes, provides a new threat, filling a void and offering hope for a reinvigorated American nation and Anglo-Protestant

creed. Huntington emphasizes that a return to this creed is especially called for because Al Qaeda targeted the United States as a Christian nation.

The full importance of these observations about the favorable effects of the militarization of society will become clear once they are viewed through the prism of Huntington’s earlier works, to which I turn below. They also, as we shall see shortly, greatly help to answer the question of how one is to treat such tomes.

ASSESSING THE THREAT

Is there a threat that Mexicans will dismember the United States—that immigrants, especially Latinos, will destroy its unity? And is the American essence found in Anglo-Protestantism? Huntington uses anecdotal and statistical data to bolster his points, as do other such authors. *The Bell Curve*, for example, includes a very large body of statistical tables and numerous correlations. There is some merit in showing that the data selected for use in these works and the ways in which they are interpreted are grossly misleading (the ability to demonstrate the true measure of the threat is essential to the arguments of both Huntington and his critics). However, a warning is called for. If one goes too far down this road, in effect one gets sucked into the world as fashioned by authors like Murray and Huntington. As anybody who has participated in a debate or political campaign knows, the battle is half won or lost according to who chooses the issues on which to focus and the terms through which these issues will be sorted out. Thus, if one follows Huntington, implicitly accepting that good Americans are Anglo-Protestants and that Mexican immigrants are or are not becoming good Americans based on how Protestant and Anglo they become, his thesis has already won half of the debate. If instead one asks what Mexican immigrants have contributed to make American society better and how many Mexican immigrants (citizens and noncitizens) have died fighting for America in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, one reaches rather different conclusions. It could be argued that one should use all social measurements possible in responding to Huntington’s assertions. But in pursuing this course, one is left open to the suggestion that still other angles exist that were overlooked,

and questions arise as to whether all measurements should be given equal weight. Thus, to avoid such unfruitful discussion, I will only briefly show that even if one accepts Huntington's particular selection of measurements and their interpretations, one still does not find the threats that he evokes. I then turn to show that Huntington's alarms are based on a profound misunderstanding of what keeps the American society united and commands our mutual respect.

The Threat of Secession?

The threat of secession is fear mongering at its extremist form. Few developments constitute a more effective call to arms than the notion that someone is in the process of taking their homes and homeland and annexing them to a foreign nation. As Huntington writes, "History shows that serious potential for conflict exists when people in one country start to refer to territory in a neighboring country in proprietary terms and to assert special rights and claims to that territory" (ibid. p. 230). But in a work that is elsewhere heavily footnoted, here Huntington offers no credible evidence that Mexicans seek to or are about to break away from America and either "return" territories to Mexico or form a new state. As Enrique Krauze, editor of *Letras Libres*, points out, "The obvious question is: who made this claim, and when? No serious (or unserious) figure of the twentieth century, political or intellectual—at least none that I know of—ever proposed something so absurd."² Indeed, one of the only sources that Huntington gives in support of the likelihood of a Mexican "reconquista" is a radical professor from the University of New Mexico, merely proving that if you Google enough you can find someone to say anything—not that the country is about to be divided, with large chunks of it gobbled up by aliens.

There is evidence, which Huntington flags, that the border between the United States and Mexico is being blurred (although it has become less so since 9/11), but it hardly supports his alarmist conclusion. If anything, this development indicates that the northern states of Mexico are becoming more

gringo-ized, given the spread of American habits and norms and American-owned and managed factories and supermarkets. Thus, no one is biting off large chunks of America, but America is sinking its teeth into other people's turf.

No Acculturation?

Huntington's other and related source of alarm, the subversion of the American creed, identity, and unity by non-acculturating Mexicans, likewise finds little support in the evidence. To reiterate, I have no intention of playing Huntington's game and getting mired in "he said; she said" or "this or that poll shows." It suffices to cite but a few pieces of data that demonstrate that the threats he depicts are simply not in evidence.

No English?

One major measurement of acculturation is the acquisition of the governing language. Huntington does not claim that Mexican immigrants fail on this count but merely voices concern that they may here differ from other ethnic groups or even from earlier Mexican immigrants. However, this is simply not the case. As Tamar Jacoby puts it, "Study after study shows that virtually everyone in the second generation grows up proficient in English, and by the third generation, two-thirds speak only English."³ And in response to Huntington's charge that Mexican-Americans can share the American dream "only if they dream in English" (ibid. p. 256), Fuchs writes, "Actually, most of the grandchildren of Latino immigrants could not dream in Spanish even if they wanted to."⁴ Indeed, at one point even Huntington himself notes that the evidence simply does not bear out this worry: "English language use and fluency for first- and second-generation Mexicans thus seem to follow the usual pattern" (Huntington 2004: 231).

³ Tamar Jacoby. 2004. "Rainbow's End." Review of *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America's National Identity*. *Washington Post*, 16 May.

⁴ Lawrence H. Fuchs. 2004. "Mr. Huntington's Nightmare." Review of *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America's National Identity*. *American Prospect*, August. p. 71.

² Enrique Krauze. 2004. "Identity Fanaticism." Review of *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America's National Identity*. *New Republic*, 21 June. p. 29.

No Protestant ethics?

Huntington writes that Mexican immigrants exhibit low levels of socioeconomic and educational achievement and that they are “more likely . . . to be on welfare than most other groups” (ibid. p. 235). The reason, Huntington thinks (drawing on a few lines by a few Hispanic writers), is that the character and values of Hispanics, and particularly Mexicans, are intrinsically “different from Anglo-Protestant ones” (ibid. p. 254). He writes that Mexicans show “lack of initiative, self-reliance, and ambition” and a “low priority for education” (ibid. p. 254). However, similar claims have been made about many immigrant groups, including Catholic immigrants. (Indeed, at one time it was thought that Catholic immigrants’ religious beliefs were incompatible with modern capitalist values, as Max Weber noted in his renowned study.) All of these groups, though, accepted the work ethic (to the extent that they did not already have it in the first place) and prospered, enriching America in the process.

Regarding welfare, a 1994 study by Pachon and DeSipio shows that the majority of immigrants of Hispanic descent hold full-time jobs, and most eschew any form of government aid.⁵ As to education, 58 percent of Latinos said that a politician’s approach to this issue would be one of the most important factors in deciding whether or not he or she would receive their vote.⁶

But above all, one should not get sucked into accepting Huntington’s main thesis. Even if it were true that many Mexican immigrants are slower to embrace Protestant ethics than other immigrants, there is no evidence that such a development will break up the nation or undermine its creed. *Indeed, the opposite may well be true.* Given that more and more of our values and social relations are undermined by longer working hours, our 24/7 society would benefit from immigrants who value family, community, and social life more than do Anglo-

Protestants.⁷ Thus, *Mexican immigrants may save America from becoming too Protestant.*

No outmarriage?

Nowhere is Huntington’s biasing of the data and the utterly unfounded conclusions that he draws from them more evident than in his treatment of outmarriage. Outmarriage is particularly important because there is no more intimate and consequential way by which immigrants can be integrated into a society than for them and their children to marry members of the society into which they are supposed to acculturate. Huntington claims that a major sign that Mexicans are refusing to become part of the American society is that they do not marry individuals outside of their ethnic group. Although he initially admits that, “Mexican intermarriage rates may not differ greatly from the Hispanic rates, but they are probably lower,” a few lines later he states flatly, “Mexicans marry Mexicans” (Huntington 2004: 240). For Huntington, this is simply another indication of Mexican immigrants’ inability to acculturate.

I have some very reliable information to the contrary: Minerva Morales, born in Mexico City to Mexican parents, did me the honor of accepting my hand in marriage. More broadly speaking, Huntington himself cites data that show that the proportion of Hispanics who outmarry is high, as great as 33.2 percent for all third-generation Hispanic women. And it is important to note that these statistics date to 1994. Later data show, as Jacoby reports, that “Among U.S.-born Asians and Hispanics, between a third and a half marry someone of a different ethnicity. By the third generation, according to some demographers, the rates reach over 50 percent for both groups.”⁸

In short, Huntington does not even come close to showing that either the integrity of the American society or its creed is under

⁵ Harry Pachon and Louis DeSipio. 1994. *New Americans by Choice: Political Perspectives of Latino Immigrants*. Boulder: Westview Press. pp. 33–34.

⁶ Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation. 2002. *National Survey of Latinos Latino Electorate*.

⁷ Please see Amitai Etzioni, “The ‘Dangerous’ Hispanics (and Asians) Will Save America.” This article is not yet available, but a version of it will appear in an upcoming volume to be edited by Carol Swain.

⁸ Tamar Jacoby. 2004. “The New Immigrants: A Progress Report.” P. 25 in *Reinventing the Melting Pot: The New Immigrants and What It Means to be American*, edited by Tamar Jacoby. New York: Basic Books.

attack. There is no threat—no justification for all the countermeasures Huntington sees as forthcoming and indirectly advocates.

A PROFOUND MISCONCEPTION

At the very core of *Who Are We?* lies Huntington's basic misleading conception as to what makes America great. Throughout American history, and again recently, alarms have been sounded when immigrants did not seem to assimilate (or did not do so quickly enough) and appeared to maintain subcultural distinctions. As a result, various coercive measures have been advocated, both to stop immigration and to deal with those immigrants already in the country.

However, I join with those who see no compelling reasons, sociological or other, to assimilate immigrants into one indistinguishable American blend—to apply, as James Bryce put it, the great American solvent to remove all traces of previous color, stripping Americans of their various ethnic or racial hyphens.⁹ There is no need for Greek-Americans, Polish-Americans, Mexican-Americans, or any other group to see themselves as plain Americans without any particular distinction, history, or subculture. Similarly, Americans can maintain their separate religions from Greek-Orthodox to Buddhism and their distinct tastes in music, dance, and cuisine without constituting a threat to the American whole. Indeed, the American culture is richer for having had an introduction to jazz and classical music, the jig and polka, Cajun and soul food, and so on.¹⁰

A melting pot is what Huntington has in mind. In contrast, the image of a mosaic, if properly understood, depicts the way in which American society actually functions in these matters, and very well indeed.¹¹ A

mosaic is enriched by a variety of elements of different shapes and colors, but it is held together by a single framework. The mosaic symbolizes a society in which various communities maintain their cultural particularities, proud and knowledgeable about their specific traditions, but they also recognize that they are integral parts of a more encompassing whole. As Americans, we are aware of our different origins but also united by a joint future and fate.

Huntington's profound misunderstanding of, if not contempt for, the genius of American society is revealed in his treatment of language, often used throughout history and in many societies both as a major factor in assessing the integration of immigrants into a society and as a metaphor for their relationship to it. Huntington writes,

If the second generation does not reject Spanish out of hand, the third generation is also likely to be bilingual, and the maintenance and fluency in both languages is likely to become institutionalized in the Mexican-American community. . . . (Huntington 2004: 232)

That is, Huntington holds that if Mexican-Americans learn English but maintain Spanish as their second language, it is an indication that they are refusing to become good Americans. But there is nothing un-American in maintaining a subculture and with it a command of the homeland language. (I note as an aside that regrettably many third-generation immigrants, Mexicans included, do not maintain such a command of their native tongue.)

Most important, the framework of the mosaic can be, and has been throughout American history, both reinforced and recast by immigrants. This cannot be stressed

⁹ James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, Vol. II. London, 1888: 328, 709: quoted by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society*. New York: Norton. 1992: 7.

¹⁰ Tamar Jacoby. 2004. "What It Means to Be American in the 21st Century." P. 306 in *Reinventing the Melting Pot*.

¹¹ or further discussion of the diversity within unity model, refer to: Amitai Etzioni. 1996. *The New Golden Rule: Community and Morality in a Democratic Society*. New York: Basic Books;

Amitai Etzioni. 2003. "Diversity within Unity." In *21st Century Opportunities and Challenges: An Age of Destruction or an Age of Transformation*, edited by Howard F. Didsbury, Jr. Bethesda, MD: World Future Society; Amitai Etzioni, 2003. "In Defense of *Diversity Within Unity*," *The Responsive Community* 13, no. 2 (Spring 2003); www.comunitariannetwork.org for the *Diversity Within Unity* platform and for a list of those who have endorsed it.

enough as often reference is made only to the enrichment that the addition of pieces (or immigrants) brings to the American mosaic (or society) by providing greater diversity through the incorporation of a growing range of cuisine, music, and holidays. Certainly, the mosaic has been made more varied. But of equal importance are the changes made to the framework of the mosaic—to what unites us and makes us Americans. These days you can be a good American without being a Protestant or even a Christian. I am.

According to Huntington, American identity was defined for 200 years by Protestants—in opposition to Catholics. Slowly, over the generations that followed, Catholic immigrants acculturated and either joined Protestant churches or changed their faith to make it Protestant-like by developing community services, adopting lay trustees, and recasting the Church in an American, national way—a truly odd list. I fail to see what is Protestant about community services; lay trusteeism is a minor adaptation of the kind that the Catholic Church (like other religious establishments, Protestant included) made many over the centuries. But most notably, American Catholics chose not to break away from the global, hierarchical Church—a course that has defined Protestants. Instead, they merely increased the local autonomy of the American chapter. This is akin to increasing states' rights, not to seceding from a federation.

Most important, American society's core of shared values (call them a creed if you must) and the social institutions that embody them have changed over the generations and now accommodate different religions as well as secular bodies of belief. Indeed, differences on the key moral and spiritual issues of the day are often between fundamentalist and moderate Americans (found in all belief systems, Protestant included) rather than simply between the practitioners of different belief systems. It then follows that Huntington's concern that Mexicans are not Protestantizing, is a problem not for America but only for his assimilationist approach.

IN PERSPECTIVE: A GLOBAL ISOMETRIC PATTERN?

Huntington's particular slant stands out more clearly when his take on the threats that he claims Anglo-Protestant America is facing is

viewed in the context of his previous works. Among these, the best known is his 1996 *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. It has become one of those books that educated people feel they ought to have read, and if they have not, pretend to know its content. Many people outside of the United States view the book as just one more significant piece of evidence as to how hostile the United States is to other belief systems and nations. (In 2002, I was a guest of the reformers in Iran at a meeting that they held at the new Center for the Dialogue of Civilization. And practically all of those who attended, from many different nations, railed against this work of Huntington's).

There is, hence, no need here to rehash the book's main thesis, but it is useful to revisit its main take on the world, which is surprisingly isometric to Huntington's take on the domestic fate of American society—as if he applied the same pattern to both, only on two different scales. In *The Clash of Civilizations*, the role of the beleaguered and threatened party is played not by the United States but by the West, which is still powerful but, like other previously great civilizations, at its peak and unaware that it is about to be overtaken—unless it heeds Huntington's warnings. The role of the threatening Mexican from *Who Are We?* is played by Islam in *The Clash of Civilizations*, and the roles played by other immigrants to the United States are reserved for other civilizations, especially that of the Chinese (“Sinic”). The same fifth column that bores from within the United States, helping the enemies of the state and the creed in *Who Are We?*, also exists in the West, this time as liberals in general and multiculturalists in particular.

Many scholars fell into the trap of treating *The Clash of Civilizations* as if it were a standard, scholarly text, questioning Huntington's definition of civilization and arguing that there might be greater or fewer civilizations than the seven that he lists, and so on. Others held that 9/11 validated Huntington (and Bernard Lewis') position. But, as I see it, the particular slant of the book is most evident in its dealing with Islam as if it were one body of belief. Actually, Islam is subject to fundamentalist and moderate interpretations. Thus, some Muslims see jihad as a call to holy war against all nonbelievers (including other

Muslims who follow a more moderate line), while others interpret it as a spiritual journey. Seyyed Hossein Nasr describes this second interpretation, that of a softer Islam, as follows: “*jihād* is therefore the inner battle to purify the soul of its imperfections, to empty the vessel of the soul of the pungent water of forgetfulness, negligence, and the tendency to evil and to prepare it for the reception of the Divine Elixir of Remembrance, Light, and Knowledge.”¹² Generally, Wahhabi Islam calls for a strict interpretation of the texts, but Sufi Islam is much more moderate and accommodating to democratic and modern economic systems. Indeed, there are hundreds of millions of Muslims in Indonesia, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Kyrgyzstan who are moderate and live peacefully together with people of other creeds. (Although the media has made much of some increase in militant Islam in these countries, most Muslims there continue to remain moderate).

It is not only empirically wrong but also psychologically troubling and strategically counterproductive to approach the world from an “us versus them” perspective and to hold that we bring light to the world through enlightenment, rationality, and democracy, while “they” are the force of darkness, the evil empire. A much more valid and healthier approach is to recognize that there are major moderate and fundamentalist camps in all civilizations and that the West should work with moderates everywhere and be on its guard against fundamentalists—everywhere. The West should also recognize that just as it brings to the world concerns of human rights and liberty, other civilizations also bring to the world valuable concerns that the West has increasingly neglected, for instance those of the common good and community.

The true dangers faced by those who buy into Huntington’s world are revealed when one examines both *Who Are We?* and *The Clash of Civilizations* in light of his first book, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, in which he openly favors militaristic, authoritarian, and homogeneous regimes over democratic and pluralistic ones. Published in 1957, the

book set off a furor in Harvard’s Department of Government where Huntington was then a young and untenured professor.

At the time, only a few years had passed since the world had faced the threat of a Fascist regime, and many military-authoritarian regimes still dotted the map. Indeed, *The Soldier and the State* so infuriated Carl Friedrich, a leading political scientist at Harvard and a refugee of Nazi Europe, that he led a successful campaign to deny Huntington tenure, prompting him to leave Harvard (although he was invited back, a few years later).

The citation of but a few quotes from the last pages of this work in which Huntington compares the military academy of West Point to the nearby town of Highland Falls provides an ample idea of his vision of America. He finds that in the military academy:

There join together the four great pillars of society: Army, Government, College, and Church. Religion subordinates man to God for divine purposes; the military life subordinates man to duty for society’s purposes. In its severity, regularity, discipline, the military society shares the characteristics of the religious order. Modern man may well find his monastery in the Army. (Huntington 1957: 465)

Huntington goes on to conclude:

West Point embodies the military ideal at its best; Highland Falls the American spirit at its most commonplace. West Point is a gray island in a many-colored sea, a bit of Sparta in the midst of Babylon. Yet is it possible to deny that the military values—loyalty, duty, restraint, dedication—are the ones America most needs today? That the disciplined order of West Point has more to offer than the garish individualism of Main Street? Historically, the virtues of West Point have been America’s vices, and the vices of the military, America’s virtues. Yet today America can learn more from West Point than West Point from America.” (ibid. pp. 465–66)

IN CONCLUSION

How is one to treat such works? Name-calling will not do. I see nothing to be gained by calling Huntington “racist,” “xenophobic,”

¹² Seyyed Hossein Nasr. 2002. *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* San Francisco: Harper Collins. p. 260.

“nativist,” or “chauvinist,” as he has been labeled.¹³ Nor can one ignore works that have such wide appeal. The prejudices they air and feed need to be addressed, and one way to do so is to deal with such books. However, it is best not to view them as works of social science once it becomes clear that their use of data is highly tendentious and misleading. Instead, one had best lay bare their ideological slant. In Huntington’s case, he is a systematic and articulate advocate of nationalism, militaristic regimes, and an earlier America in which there was one homogenous creed and little tolerance for pluralism. I would fight for the right of such right wing positions to be aired, just as I would for left wing ones. However, one must lay bare their subtext. This is best achieved when later works are viewed in the context of previous ones, especially when they all reflect the same slant, as the works of Huntington do.

Huntington’s fears are not wholly without foundation. He defines himself as a settler, not as an immigrant. Settlers, white and Protestant, are those who fashioned the “true” America and controlled it. This control indeed has and is being undermined by immigrants, yet it is not America that is losing power and creed but (as elsewhere in the world)—the settlers. Thus, Huntington’s position does make sense if one sees the threats

that he evokes as endangering not the nation but his privileged group—and his alarmist possibilities of recourse as attempts to protect it—not the United States of America. But in reality, it is Huntington and those who share his position who pose a real threat to the nation. Huntington says that he is concerned about divisions, yet he divides the nation in ways that very few others do, between settlers and the rest of us. And to the extent that Huntington and others are able to drum up fears—of Mexicans, Muslims, or the unwashed masses of voters—they may be able to sow conflict in American society.

Moreover, they might be able to slow those processes through which American society has demonstrated to the world that a nation can grow and benefit by people of different backgrounds and traditions becoming a part of it—without having these people have to surrender their subcultural and ethnic identities. To the extent that Huntington and company succeed in making us approach whole civilizations as evil empires, they will undermine national security by causing us to overlook major potential allies across the world. And to the extent that they succeed in putting the nation into a permanent, militarized mobilization, they weaken the foundations of democracy. It follows that reviewing such tomes helps us to understand both the true sources and nature of the threats that the nation, indeed the world, face, with which we are sure to cope as we have done in the past and continue to do today.

¹³ Letters. 2004. *Foreign Policy*. November/December, p. 4.