One Nation Divisible: Samuel Huntington’s Jeremiad on the American Future
by Stephen A. Schuker


“Pity poor Mexico,” said Porfirio Díaz, one of the less calamitous autocrats to rule that country in its early years, “so far from God, so near the United States.” In his wide-ranging meditation on perils to America’s national identity, Samuel Huntington examines the bilateral relationship from a perspective north of the Rio Grande. This book is not for the faint of heart. Huntington portrays the United States as a weakly defended castle, under siege by an alien horde while those with the most to lose have deserted the ramparts.

Mexico has gone through tumultuous transformation since Díaz departed in 1911 for an amply cushioned retirement in Paris and the Mexican revolution began. After nearly a century of ongoing revolution, Huntington intimates, the basic social physiognomy of the country has changed more slowly than public rhetoric would suggest. A sophisticated elite in Mexico City, largely of Spanish origin, retains most of the commercial and landed wealth. The rest of the population, 60 percent mestizo and 30 percent pure Amer-indian, has not fully shared in the country’s modernization. In outlying rural areas the peasantry has scarcely emerged from peonage. In some southern communities, indigenous dialects survive, and Spanish culture serves as a mere veneer. Some 40 percent of Mexicans, up from 27 percent in 1998, live below the conventional poverty line, and the lowest 10 percent dispose of only 1.6 percent of national income. Income disparities exceed those of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. Hence while income per capita now creeps up toward one-sixth of the U.S. level, that figure vastly understates the differences in well-being between the average Mexican and the average North American. These are the discouraging metrics in a country that shares a 2,000-mile long border with the United States, the division marked partly by a shallow river and partly by no topographic features at all.
Since World War II, Mexico has undergone a population explosion. That development, Huntington shows, has grave consequences for national identity and economy in the United States. When Hernando Cortés and his fellow conquistadores arrived before the capital city, Tenochtitlán, in 1519, the Aztec Empire comprised 5 million people. Roughly 20 million Amerindians lived in the wider area that became Mexico. A century later, unfamiliar European diseases had wiped out all but 1 million. The population did not recover to the former level until 1940. Subsequently, owing to the introduction of modern medicine combined with a third-world fertility rate, the number of Mexicans has increased on a truly Malthusian scale. There are now 106 million Mexicans. Current projections suggest that the number might balloon to 180 million by the middle of the twenty-first century.

Although the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party sought to exclude religion from the public sphere, the overwhelming majority of Mexicans still adhere to a syncretic version of Catholicism. Priestly influence in faith and morals remains strong. Nevertheless, the administration of Luis Echeverría Álvarez concluded in 1976 that only state-sponsored family planning could stave off a demographic disaster. Considering the endemic corruption and inefficiency of Mexican public life, Echeverría’s birth-control policy has succeeded up to a point. The fertility rate of Mexican women plummeted from 5.40 in 1976 to 2.49 in 2004. The population currently grows at the reduced rate of 1.43 percent annually. Yet a not-so-secret mechanism underlies this triumph of public policy: the export of surplus Mexican population to the north. In 2004 the Mexican birth rate stood at 21.44 per thousand, the death rate at 4.73 per thousand (down from 33.2 per thousand in 1910). The out-migration to the United States, 4.87 per thousand according to official calculations, though in reality substantially more, keeps those figures in a semblance of equilibrium.

Precise data on immigration remain elusive. The U.S. Census Bureau, the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, and private groups such as the Center for Immigration Studies offer differing estimates. Moreover, the statistics appear internally inconsistent. The Census Bureau began to ask detailed citizenship questions only in 1994. Quite naturally, undocumented aliens respond less frankly to such inquiries than do legal residents. As best one can determine, upward of 35 million immigrants from all sources combined currently live in the United States. Roughly 10 million count as illegal. Another 4.2 million illegals received amnesty under the 1986 Immigration Reform and Naturalization Act or subsequent administrative adjustments. The total number of foreign born continues to increase by over 1 million a year. In the four years beginning in March 2000, 6.1 million immigrants arrived, although the voluntary or involuntary return flow reduced the net accretion to 4.3 million. In contrast to transatlantic migration during the early twentieth century, the current surge does not correlate strongly with the business cycle. Owing to the social-welfare safety net, newcomers need not worry so much as formerly about immediately making
a living. Significantly, immigrants produce about 750,000 children annually. The latter receive automatic citizenship by virtue of their native birth, and having an American minor child confers some status on the mother.\(^1\)

About half of the net immigrant inflow arrives without documentation, and of that group 65 to 70 percent comes from Mexico. These calculations form the basis for the estimate that 350,000 to 400,000 additional Mexicans, over and above return migrants, cross the border every year. This latter statistic, naturally, figures as the tip of the iceberg. A large though indeterminate number go back and forth, depending on employment opportunities, welfare subsidies, and affective ties. Although the border police intercept a million potential border-crossers annually, a good many make it through on a subsequent try or through family reunification programs.

A further complication looms. The principal internal sources of Mexican immigration are changing. In 1960 roughly 70 percent of Mexican immigrants came from the seven states closest to the American border. This area, however, has benefited disproportionately from NAFTA and the establishment of U.S.-owned maquiladora factories just south of the border. Currently only 42 percent of border-crossers come from those contiguous jurisdictions. Increasingly, the poorest and least skilled campesinos from backward southern states like Chiapas and Oaxaca undertake the long trek north. In the American Southwest, we can discern the demographic beginnings of Montezuma’s revenge. Mexicans have recently become the majority population in Los Angeles and make up 72 percent of the students in Los Angeles public schools. The curve appears similar for a host of smaller cities from California to Texas. Hispanics constitute one out of five newborns in the United States as a whole, and double that percentage in areas of concentration. Charles Truxillo, a regional studies professor at the University of New Mexico, asserts: “Southwest Chicanos and Norteno Mexicanos are becoming one people again.”\(^2\) That is precisely what gives Samuel Huntington nightmares. He has designed Who Are We? to serve as a fire bell in the night. The rapidity of demographic change, he contends, figures as a clear and present danger for American national identity.

In previous scholarship, Huntington has argued that culture—the fundamental values, beliefs, and assumptions of a given society—stands as the key determinant of human progress. He and like-minded scholars at Harvard’s Cultural Values and Human Progress project have carried through a comparative study of cultures. They demonstrate that the mores and values of a given society, at least as much as its geographical location, natural resources, or capital and labor inputs, affect the rate of economic development, the pace of political democratization, and even preferences in international affairs. Within a


\(^2\) Quoted in Victor Davis Hanson, Mexifornia: A State of Becoming (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2003), p. 32.
single generation, cultures that value freedom of enterprise, honest government, the rule of law, thrift and discipline, hard work, and education can develop several times faster than cultures that do not. Culture makes “almost all the difference.” The general idea is far from new. Students of the industrial revolution have shown in rich detail that England, English offshoots, and (with a lag) Western Europe developed wealthier and more humane societies than the rest of the world precisely because of such values.

In an earlier work that speaks with startling immediacy to current national problems, Huntington addressed the implications of cultural differences for international affairs. In *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Simon & Schuster, 1996), Huntington questions the Wilsonian presumptions that came to dominate foreign policymaking under President Clinton and that have won fresh devotees under the aegis of George W. Bush. The West, Huntington maintains, has from the Enlightenment onward developed a unique—and implicitly superior—set of values. At the apex of Western power, he observes, American and European leaders came to imagine that they could impose their notions of individual liberty, political democracy, cultural freedom, and human rights on the rest of the world. As the imperialist tide receded, the technology transfer remained, but the cultural transfer often failed to stand the test of time. Perhaps imperialism did not last long enough for Western institutions to take root. In any event, Islamic societies (with the possible exception of Turkey), African polities, and most Asian cultures do not accept Western values as universal. Quite often, they actively repudiate them. Echoing Oswald Spengler, Huntington expresses pervasive pessimism about the course of international affairs. He has no patience with the widespread triumphalism that accompanied the end of the Cold War. Civilizations, in his view, rise and fall. The West (he includes all of Europe, Russia, and India in his definition) is already in free fall demographically. It ought to maintain technological and military superiority as long as it can, but without illusions about stemming the rise of “barbarism” elsewhere.

This is strong medicine, and it set the dovecotes of the liberal intelligentsia aflutter—so much so that Huntington found it expedient to claim that his critics had in part misunderstood him. In *Who Are We?* however, Huntington extends his darkling analysis with a disquisition on American national identity. He sets forth three basic propositions. First, the United States did not develop as a nation of immigrants or a melting pot, but rather as a nation of Anglo-Protestant settlers who came to work out their destiny in a virgin land. American institutions

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4 For the sake of simplicity, Huntington does not categorize Latin American societies, which reflect the conflux of Iberian, African, and autochthonal influences. Darrin F. McMahon suggests that within the Hispanosphere the Western/non-Western split tends to follow ethnic rather than national lines. See “The Other Transatlantic Tie: The Hispanosphere,” *Orbis*, Fall 2004.
rest narrowly upon the original Anglo-Protestant culture. Second, uncontrolled Mexican immigration threatens the integrity of that culture. Last but not least, domestic elites, and in particular the shapers of public opinion, have abandoned the American creed for the spurious attractions of multiculturalism. When Bill Clinton declared in 1997 that America needed a third “great revolution” to prove that it could flower without a dominant European culture, he reflected the mentality that had already conquered the universities, the media, and part of the business community.

As Huntington structures his argument, the historical background comes first. David Hackett Fischer has drawn distinctions among the four different waves of English and Scots-Irish settlers who peopled America in the seventeenth century, and students of the Middle and Southern colonies identify further shadings of religious belief and disposition toward the British political heritage.\(^5\) Comparatists note that settler societies around the world follow no predetermined pattern.\(^6\) Exercising the prerogative of the political scientist, however, Huntington passes over such fine detail. In his reductionist model, the East Anglians who settled New England created the “American essence.” As a general rule, he asserts, the settlers spoke or in time learned English; they boasted a high level of literacy; and if Dissenters they took their Protestant religion most seriously as a guide to a worthy life. Moreover, the founder generation felt certain of its values and created a society in its own image. By the time of the separation from England, he asserts, the thirteen colonies exhibited a considerable ethnic homogeneity. Apart from slaves and Native Americans, they were 80 percent British, 98 percent Protestant, and strongly influenced by the political ideals of the seventeenth-century English revolutions. Before the new wave of immigration beginning in 1965, almost half of all Americans descended from those seventeenth- and eighteenth-century settlers. What’s more, according to Huntington, the “American creed” had taken final shape by the time of the Revolution.

Huntington devotes several chapters to fleshing out his notion of the American creed. The essence seems to be that “Protestantism, republicanism, and individualism are all one.” Huntington talks a great deal about religion, and properly so. Religion lay at the heart of American culture through the end of the nineteenth century, and perhaps beyond. It is surely an ingredient of American exceptionalism that over 94 percent of our citizens express faith in God or a spirit, 69 percent believe in angels, and 59 percent feel sure that the apocalyptic prophecies of the Book of Revelation will come true. Nowhere


else among the advanced industrial states (save for Poland and Ireland) does such religiosity survive. But Huntington wants to go further. He conflates religious observance with honorable behavior. He considers the four Great Awakenings the fundament of our “public theology” and perceives the latter as a necessary antidote to moral decline today. Certain readers may have trouble following Huntington on this ground. One wonders whether John Winthrop’s messianic notion of a “city upon a hill” will provide the key to solving practical problems in the twenty-first century. Indeed, Huntington maintained in The Clash of Civilizations that it would be wise to avoid such universalist pretensions abroad. Does a credal culture at home hamper the formulation of a foreign policy based soberly on national interest? Huntington extols G. K. Chesterton’s description of the United States as “a nation with the soul of a church.” Whatever the historical salience of that concept, one may question whether it promotes national well-being in a scientific age. The fact that one-third of Americans are “born again” will scarcely help us to decode the human genome, hold our own in high-energy physics, or maintain our lead in computer technology.

Huntington stands on stronger ground in outlining the secular aspects of the American creed. A cardinal principle of post-modern sociology holds that nations are cultural artifacts, in other words “imagined communities.” Some are formed from the top down by war. Others consolidate through a subtle manipulation of symbols both at the top and the bottom. Language, religion, attachment to place, common war experience, or ethnic and racial identification can variously form the basis for national identity. Empires that fail to develop such mechanisms—Austria-Hungary or the Ottoman Empire in the twentieth century—lose cohesion. National identity always proves malleable, writes Huntington, but American identity exhibits particular fragility because it rests on a “remembered community” defined by historical memory and political institutions. Our national narrative, consecrated with blood in the Revolution and the Civil War, commemorated with patriotic rituals, and rehearsed in our public schools until about 1970, turns on a celebration (not with historical accuracy, of course) of the American creed. Americans traditionally stood united—in principle if not always in observance—in a commitment to liberty, individualism, equality of opportunity, human rights, the rule of law, and private property. Huntington contends that until the 1960s

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7 James Kurth contends that tradition-based societies consider American foreign policy destabilizing because it promotes a proselytizing form of individualism at the expense of hierarchy and community. On this point see “The Protestant Deformation and U.S. Foreign Policy,” Orbis, Spring 1998.

8 Huntington is not alone in favoring an increased role for religion in the public sphere. For a parallel argument that addresses West European societies, see George Weigel, The Cube and the Cathedral: Europe, America, and Politics without God (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

every immigrant group—the Irish and Germans before the Civil War, the Eastern
and Southern Europeans from 1880 to World War I—assimilated by accepting
the creed as it stood and abandoning foreign loyalties and behavior patterns.
Even the Catholic Church, he contends, set its critics at ease by relinquishing
ultramontane tendencies and embracing a “Protestantization” of ritual.10

Huntington spends the first third of his book elaborating this thesis,
and he does so with a calculated show of scholarship. He cites no less than
nineteen of his Harvard senior colleagues, along with a baker’s dozen of
former junior faculty. The casual reader may feel that he is back in a general
education course on some Ivy League campus. All the same, Huntington
provides only the roughest draft of history. Assimilation did not proceed so
smoothly as he suggests during the last great wave of immigration from 1882 to
1914. One-third of the newcomers failed to adjust and returned to their native
lands (7–8 percent for Jews and Irish, but 60 percent for certain Eastern and
Southern European nationalities). Among those who stayed, not all embraced
the “Anglo-Protestant” culture with enthusiasm, even in the second generation.
Nativism enjoyed a renaissance, not merely among reactionaries, but also
among Progressives. Arguing that “biology is destiny,” the day’s scientists
maintained that East Europeans had smaller cranial capacity than old-stock
Americans.11 Good-government types deplored the corruption and sanitary
decline in the cities. Reformers denounced the “lower scum and the upper
scum,” as they colorfully denominated the new immigrants and the big business-
men who hired them at substandard wages. To be sure, radicals in the settlement
houses and the social-gospel seminaries praised the melting pot. Yet their
doctrine of “immigrant gifts” remained a distinctly minority position. Theodore
Roosevelt spoke for the great majority in propagating impassioned nationalism
and insisting that immigrants embrace “100 percent Americanism.”12 In the end,
the melting pot never melted. Immigrant nationalities remained largely stuck in
residential and occupational ghettos through World War II.

Despite those obstacles, immigrants integrated the last time around,
surely if slowly, owing to a confluence of sound civic institutions and lucky
historical circumstances. Chief credit goes to the public schools. Fine schools

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10 In the rosy light of contemporary ecumenicism, non-specialists tend to forget how the
majority used to conceive this issue. See Paul Blanshard, The Irish and Catholic Power (Boston:
Beacon Press, 1953); and ibid., American Freedom and Catholic Power (Boston: Beacon Press,
1958). Huntington strains mightily to fit the Irish into his model of smooth acculturation. Note
the contrary evidence in Noel Ignatiev, How the Irish Became White (New York: Routledge,
11 Madison Grant’s long-time bestseller, The Passing of the Great Race, or, The Racial Basis of
European History (New York: Scribner, 1916), reflected his authority as head of the New York
Museum of Natural History. The demotion of the Germans from Anglo-Saxon to intermediate
Alpine rank between the 1916 and 1918 editions evidently failed to undermine the popular
credibility of his classifications.
12 The standard work remains John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Pattern of American
educated immigrant children to a high standard in literacy, numeracy, and civics. They fostered acculturation to American values without self-doubt and provided convenient night courses for adults. Unfortunately, nothing comparable exists today. Forced busing, the erosion of discipline, and the introduction of a spoils system for principals and teachers drove middle-class families to the suburbs or private schools beginning in the late 1960s. They will not return. The Bush administration’s “No Child Left Behind” program focuses on students in the bottom third of the ability pyramid. However implausible it may appear in current circumstances, once upon a time inner-city high schools served as the royal road to social mobility.

In addition, the two world wars accelerated the process of social integration in various ways. Censorship put foreign-language newspapers out of business during World War I. Prohibition, however disastrous in other respects, narrowed the gap in behavior between natives and immigrants. Finally, the government-sponsored “Four Freedoms” propaganda in World War II drew its inspiration from the American creed. Armed Forces cinema portrayed Americans of all origins fighting together. The celluloid ideal paved the way for the reality. Afterward, the GI Bill transformed the opportunities for college-level study. Eastern and Southern Europeans, and also East Asians, caught up to older-stock citizens in social and economic status. Huntington adduces astonishing statistics showing that the overwhelming majority of fourth-generation Americans marry exogamously. Even a comfortable majority of Jews and Asians marry outside their ethnic group. The United States is well on the way to creating a blended white and Asian middle class, with only Hispanics and African-Americans remaining outside the inter-marriage circle.

Huntington argues that such felicitous integration cannot possibly take place with Hispanic-Americans, or for that matter with Islamic immigrants from the Middle East. Hispanics in the United States number 43 million today, and they are geographically concentrated. The present fertility rate is 1.8 for non-Hispanic whites, 2.1 for African-Americans, and 3.0 for Hispanics. Hispanic women start having children early, so that they register a shorter mean intergenerational span than other ethnicities. Demographic trends rarely remain static for long. At the present time, however, the Hispanic population grows twelve times as fast on a percentage basis, and three times as fast in absolute numbers, as does the non-Hispanic white population. If fertility and immigration rates continue on projected lines, non-Hispanic whites will become a minority by 2040. The United States will evolve into a bilingual, bicultural, and increasingly fragmented society. Huntington contends that four mutually reinforcing processes will hasten this current along. First, the English language no longer serves as the cement that holds the culture together. Second, the doctrines of multiculturalism and “diversity” have sapped society from within. Next, Supreme Court decisions and the embrace of affirmative action by our major institutions substitutes group rights for individual rights. That makes it advantageous for favored minorities to cultivate a special
identity. Finally, from the Vietnam era onward, the elites have become cynical about patriotism and the core culture.

Does Huntington sound the alarm too early? Has he simply conjured up an academic gloss to highlight political differences between the Blue States and the Red States? Is he rehearsing the shopworn arguments of nineteenth-century nativists, as the cacophony of the *bien-pensant* liberal weeklies insinuates? Or, with suitable discount for rhetorical effect, has he discerned through a glass darkly a future America torn from its moorings? Historians do not practice futurology. It is difficult enough, as the old Soviet joke had it, to predict the past. But political scientists make a business of extrapolating the future from contradictory present trends. At a minimum, Huntington raises difficult questions that deserve more attention than our national discourse accords to them.

Few informed readers are likely to fault Huntington’s strictures against bilingual education. In the age of television and the computer, mastery of written English has declined even among native speakers. Most studies show that Hispanics who elect ghettoization in classes taught in Spanish do less well than their compatriots who choose English immersion, and of course far less well than Russian or Chinese immigrants. For too many Hispanics, Spanish-language classes serve as a destination rather than a transition. In New York City, for example, up to 85 percent of students in ESL (English as a Second Language) classes remain in the program until they graduate, wholly unprepared for college or the job market, or until they drop out of school altogether.

Beginning in the 1970s, the Federal Office of Civil Rights, backed by the courts, began to insist on “bilingual” classes wherever the use of English would have a “disparate impact.” Bilingual education quickly became a patronage scam for professional Hispanics. Although overwhelming majorities have voted to abolish such classes in twelve referenda around the country, Hispanics vote for them, in part as a point of pride. As Huntington points out, bilingual education gives a wide berth to core American civics. It encourages separatism, even Hispanic chauvinism. The ubiquitous agents of the federal and state bureaucracies, seconded by their allies in the liberal Protestant churches and the universities, resurrect the old doctrine of “immigrant gifts.” Soon enough, the products of such programs demand the abolition of English requirements for voting, drivers’ licenses, and employment. The specter of a two-class society looms.

Huntington deplores the decline of English as a common language, but he offers no practical remedy. In Miami, for example, less than a third of adults claim to speak English very well. Spanish has become the language of commerce, business, politics, and the media. But the people who run Miami are the former Havana upper-middle class who arrived in 1961 with the first wave of exiles. Those Cubans have made the transition to American life with spectacular success, no worse than the skilled Hungarians who came after the
failed 1956 revolution. Huntington cites the high rate of vicious crime in Miami, but he should blame Jimmy Carter, who allowed Castro to empty his jails and asylums in the 1980 Mariel boatlift, rather than the 800,000 law-abiding Cubans who have made Miami a profitable entrepôt for Latin American trade. Guatemalans and Costa Ricans have also done reasonably well. Non-Hispanic Americans will have to learn Spanish to rise in the Miami hierarchy. That is a fact of life. No one need lament some added pressure on native students to learn foreign languages in a globalized world.

Huntington’s pessimism appears more justified when he turns to the pathologies of the underclass in the American Southwest. Some 23 million Mexicans, by the count of President Vicente Fox, now live north of the border. A growing number regard themselves as part of a diaspora. The Mexican government encourages that sentiment. Illegal as well as legal border-crossers can apply at any consulate for a *matricula consular,* a registration card that confirms their status as Mexicans with American residence. These are people who retain a primary loyalty to Mexico. They vote in Mexican elections, send money home, and even plan to return some day, though few of them ever do. In contrast to other ethnic groups, they encourage their children and grandchildren to retain primary fluency in Spanish. Scarcely 30 percent of the generation that arrived before 1990 has achieved naturalization, compared with 80 percent and more of similarly situated European immigrants. In the native-born second generation, 53.3 percent describe themselves as Chicano, Hispanic, or Mexican, and a mere 3.9 percent as “American.”

Most Mexican immigrants work hard at dismal tasks, but they remain unprepared for American life. It might seem unfair to recall that the Mesoamericans practiced human sacrifice and had not yet invented the wheel when the Spanish arrived in the sixteenth century. But surely the low skill level of the present immigrant generation has relevance. Huntington’s statistics, supported by census data, make for cheerless reading. The average undocumented worker boasts only 7.4 years of schooling. Since education has low priority in this sub-culture, subsequent generations do only marginally better. Even in the fourth generation, 41 percent drop out of high school, and only 3.5 percent achieve college degrees. Mexican-Americans suffer a poverty rate three times that of Chinese immigrants, and five times that of Indian immigrants. A mere 28 percent (fewer than Cuban-Americans) claim to speak English very well. Fully 34 percent of Mexican immigrants receive welfare or other public assistance. Men in the first generation find plentiful work as farm laborers, food service or building maintenance workers, gardeners, or in other menial occupations. President Fox committed a grave impropriety by observing that Mexicans do the work that African-Americans decline to do. Nonetheless, however delicately one phrases the matter, the Southwest economy—not to speak of particular sectors elsewhere in the country—has grown dependent on cheap Mexican labor.
Economists agree that discrimination does not depress remuneration for this subgroup: education, age, and skill level explain practically the entire wage gap. Yet no one accounts adequately for the deferred social costs. Twenty-seven percent of Mexican-Americans age 21–64, and half of the population over 65, have attained “disabled status.” Victor Hanson, a keen observer of the Fresno scene, elaborates on the psychological sequelae. The second generation, feeling its parents exploited and discarded, perceives greater opportunities in the world of drug-dealing and crime.

Huntington does not describe the predicament of Mexican immigrants as sui generis. Some other ethnic groups arriving since the 1965 immigration reform, he notes, have also refused to integrate. President Bush rehearses the fealty of American Muslims at every opportunity, yet the data contradict him. Fully 57 percent of Muslim immigrants and 32 percent of American-born Muslims would prefer to leave the United States for an Islamic country if they could. Some 74 percent would like to replace public schools with Islamic schools. Only 10 percent express unequivocal loyalty to the United States. Huntington cites those figures to make a wider point about the multicultural enthusiasm that has replaced old-style civics in our schools. Why the elites have imposed multicultural doctrine on an initially skeptical population of parents and students remains a historical puzzle. Perhaps at the start the idea was to raise the self-esteem of disadvantaged groups. In a therapeutic society it becomes more important to make everyone feel included than to convey what really happened.

Huntington rightly portrays multiculturalism as “basically an anti-Western ideology.” In a multicultural world all civilizations are equal, but European civilization is less equal than others. Jeane Kirkpatrick once joked that, during the 1990s, freedom had vanquished Marxism everywhere except at American universities. This is only partly a joke. Administrators and faculty have collaborated diligently to introduce political correctness into the curriculum. They have deemphasized the fundaments of European culture—and of the American creed—in favor of a “constructed” approach. The new curriculum, some think, better fits the needs of a globalized world, but it does so by misconstruing the past and creating a distorted perspective on the present. The reformers have done their work thoroughly. It is still possible for students to get a fine education at leading universities if they choose their courses wisely. Those who follow the crowd, however, assimilate a postmodern epistemology without realizing that an alternative might exist. Huntington imagines that a reaction is coming, connected to a worldwide religious revival. But his evidence suggests otherwise.

14 Hanson, *Mexifornia*, pp. 35–59.
Huntington considers “diversity” a stratagem to accommodate unassimilated minorities in schools and in the workplace. He undertakes a long analysis of the case law through which the Supreme Court turned the constitutional guarantees of “equal protection” and “due process” virtually into their opposites. He notes that Thurgood Marshall, who would go on to become the first black Supreme Court justice, proclaimed in 1948 that “classifications based on race or color have no moral or legal validity in our society.” Martin Luther King embellished that thesis with his preternatural eloquence as late as 1963. Yet the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 marked the high point and the end of colorblind legislation. Black spokesmen, and Hispanic leaders less volubly, changed their mind when it became apparent that equal rights would not produce equal results. The Supreme Court, seconded by administrative agencies empowered by the Johnson administration, began to interpret existing law to sanction affirmative discrimination. Thus began American society’s evolution from guarantees of individual rights to the recognition of group rights. Huntington realizes that it would be wrong to blame those developments wholly on the Warren and Burger courts, still less on the equivocations of the swing justice, Sandra Day O’Connor, in the 1990s. Elected government officials, Executive Branch appointees, intellectuals, and the quality press endorsed and pushed the process along.15

Huntington believes that group rights set ethnic categories against each other and undermine the American creed. But one can easily follow the political process that led to their adoption. The Democratic and Republican parties maintain an ever-shifting equilibrium. African-Americans represent the potential margin of victory for Democrats in key jurisdictions; hence Republicans labor to secure the votes of Hispanics. Since even the most vigorous application of affirmative action fails to produce equal results, supporters of the doctrine took the next step. They have conjured up the independent value of “diversity.” Minorities get ahead in those circumstances by cultivating group identification. Despite a thumb on the scale, the redistribution of life chances sought by the reformers progresses slowly. At the University of Virginia, for example, the odds ratio of an African-American’s securing admission is 106 times that of a white or Asian candidate with equal qualifications. Hispanics receive less extreme preference, yet the odds ratio of a Hispanic receiving the thick envelope remains 2.8 times that of an equally qualified student lacking minority status.16 No doubt private institutions behave similarly, even if shielded from the discovery provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

With disparities of this magnitude, it seems improbable that the political process will sanction Huntington’s preference for a return to equal individual rights any time soon.

Huntington seeks to cover several topics at once, and inevitably his focus tends to wander. Consistently, however, he reserves his main animus for the cosmopolitan, internationalist-minded writers and thinkers who he believes have lost faith in the American creed, abandoned the concept of national sovereignty, and driven civil society off course. Invoking the ghost of Julien Benda, he discerns a new treason of the intellectuals. And he doesn’t hesitate to name names. Still, readers outside the academy may wonder why a broad-gauged thinker of his standing accords such importance to these “moralist transnationals.” Huntington would answer that the United States has moved toward an “unrepresentative democracy” in which elite opinion occupies the commanding heights. On crucial issues, he insists, the political class inside the Beltway takes its cue from the elite rather than the election returns. Congress passes laws and an entrenched bureaucracy crafts policies that the bulk of the American people abhor. But one can push such a theory only so far. Huntington goes beyond his evidence when he extends his animadversions to “Davos Men,” the so-called cosmocrats who direct the global web of enterprise. There is no obvious reason to suppose that high-ranking executives of multinational corporations evince less patriotism than does the average American. Surely the editorial page of the Wall Street Journal, which largely reflects the concerns of such “gold-collar workers,” exhibits a sobriety not often found among the chattering classes.

It is no easy task to identify the prevailing ideology in a country as variegated as our own. Probably Huntington over-interprets a general skepticism that has suffused the country since the Vietnam War. Paradoxically, also, the civil-rights revolution may have fostered a new form of stratification. As upper-end professionals move into residential enclaves and withdraw their children from the public schools, they have fewer points of contact with less affluent Americans. Insofar as Huntington puts his finger on an unusually rapid inflection in elite attitudes, a generational explanation may fit the facts best. In the United States, generational conflict has long occupied the political space filled by class conflict in Europe. Each of the thirteen generations in American history has sought to differentiate itself from the previous one. The pattern will no doubt continue.

Arguably, Huntington creates a distraction by directing so much fire at the purported apostasy of the elites. The apostates will feel personally aggrieved. They figure, after all, as the principal reviewers of his book. They will likely respond in kind. Huntington’s more targeted analysis of the threat

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to national identity posed by unregulated Mexican immigration may get lost among the alarums and excursions. That would be a pity because the nation needs to engage the problem while it still admits of a solution.

Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray have illuminated one ticklish aspect of the topic in their controversial book, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*. Huntington does not refer to his late colleague Herrnstein. There is an old saying that Harvard men enjoy complete freedom of speech and have the good sense not to use it. When Herrnstein published the preliminary studies for *The Bell Curve*, activist students followed him around the campus yelling “pigeon man” (he had previously studied pigeons) until his untimely death. Possibly Huntington reckons that he has slain enough sacred cows for one outing. No one could reasonably fault him for avoiding an added distraction.

In any event, Herrnstein and Murray submit that the source of immigration exerts a measurable effect on the gene pool. One need not embark on a dispute whether IQ tests truly measure intelligence, or whether what we describe as intelligence constitutes one central factor or a combination of factors. It is sufficient to acknowledge that cognitive ability is between 40 and 80 percent inherited, that intelligence tests are not biased in the sense that they accurately predict academic accomplishment and occupational success, and that the spectrum of intelligence test results differs among ethnic groups. Moreover, the non-inherited component of cognitive performance correlates strongly with the socioeconomic status of the birth parents. Finally, realized intelligence proves not very malleable through education or later life experience. As Herrnstein and Murray say, some scholars do not admit these discouraging propositions, but the matter recalls the discussion of sex in Victorian England. People speak differently in public and in private.

The results take on practical importance because recent Latino immigrants score a full standard deviation below the majority native population and 0.5 standard deviation below earlier Latino immigrant cohorts on standard intelligence tests. What’s more, better-educated women tend to postpone childbearing, so the high fertility rate among Latino immigrant women has a dysgenic effect. Current immigrants from all sources register a mean IQ of 95, but disaggregation reveals that East Asians average 105 (with particular out-performance in mathematics and spatial relations) while Latinos average 91. To put this difference in perspective with a statistical truism, a 3-point drop in average intelligence for a given sample results in a 42 percent reduction in the number of highly talented people with an IQ over 135. Herrnstein and Murray conclude that average intelligence in the United States is sinking by 0.8–1.0 IQ points per generation, and that the mix of the latest immigration wave contributes to that trend.

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Concerns about the country’s cognitive capital take on special urgency in the age of advancing globalization. For many decades, firms with global reach have outsourced manufacturing to countries where they could access competent labor at a reasonable price. To retain and expand markets, companies must continually seek to improve their cost and quality structure, time to market, and ability to innovate. The United States can afford to let low-end manufacturing go overseas if it keeps up innovation in growth industries at the beginning of the product cycle. Recently, however, advances in digitization and telecommunications have made it possible to outsource knowledge work as well as manufacturing. In an ever-widening sphere of products and services, Americans will have to compete with highly trained professionals in China, India, and elsewhere. We must place a premium on a highly educated labor force at home. In those circumstances, the 1965 Immigration Reform Act, which fosters low-skill immigration, no longer meets national needs.

The rapidity of domestic social change has weighty implications for American grand strategy. Reconfiguring the immigration flow should become an integral part of foreign economic policy. In the long-running debate between realists and idealists, the former contend that the nation should focus its energies on security interests in Europe and the Asian-Pacific region, and on trade and monetary relations. They deprecate the tendency, since the end of the Cold War, to implement “foreign policy as social work.” The idealists reply that national interest is not a guide, but merely a construct. In a post-Westphalian world, they argue, certain kinds of distress are simply “morally unacceptable.” The United States has both the obligation and the luxury to shape the international milieu in order to prevent “intolerable horrors and disorder.” Parties to both sides of the controversy assume that the United States will remain the unique superpower for a very long time to come. But will it, if current demographic trends continue unchecked?

It would help our competitive position to vastly expand the H-1B work visa program for computer scientists and engineers, to set out the welcome mat for other professionals, to close the southern border to illegal transit, and to channel the admission of unskilled labor into a limited guest-worker program. A carefully controlled bracero scheme could meet employers’ most urgent needs. Such a radical change in direction would occasion a temporary

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22 George J. Borjas, a Cuban refugee who has become the nation’s most prominent economist specializing in immigration, offers a reasoned defense of the case for admitting immigrants on the basis of skill and cutting back the total to 500,000 annually. See Heaven’s Door: Immigration Policy and the American Economy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).
labor shortage and require automation in food services and agriculture. But it might also yield an immigrant mix more willing to embrace the traditional American creed. Huntington does not think this likely to happen. American elites are not tough-minded enough. Is he too pessimistic? As Adam Smith observed during another time of troubles over two hundred years ago, “there is a great deal of ruin in a nation.”

A Nation Must Think Before it Acts One Nation Divisible: Samuel Huntington’s Jeremiad on the American Future. Share: Facebook. Twitter. Linkedin. Mail. Print. Samuel Huntington’s The Clash of Civilizations. Continue Reading. Huntington argued that the pivotal clash defining the near future would be a series of confrontations between specific civilizations. These civilizations share very powerful cultural values, historical connections and in group commonalities that set them apart from each other thereby transcending both economic and political constraints (and in many cases superficialities). While most of the nation states draw somewhat from a Christian (Catholic-Protestant) moral core they have incorporated within their framework a universalism (certainly evident in the elite) that at its root sees a world that would be all the better if others adopted enlightenment driven western values. One Nation Divisible: Samuel Huntington's Jeremiad on the American Future. Published on Dec 1, 2006 in Orbis. doi: 10.1016/j.orbis.2005.10.013. Copy DOI.