

Samuel Huntington Summarized

Samuel Huntington is a mil-mannered man whose sharp opinions— about the collision of Islam and the West, about the role of the military in liberal society, about what separates countries that work from countries that don't — have proved to be as prescient as they have been controversial. Huntington has been ridiculed and vilified, but in the decades ahead his view of the will be the way it really looks.

The most memorable review that Samuel Phillips Huntington, the Albert J. Weatherhear III University Professor of Harvard, ever got was a bad one. He described how Matthew Josephson, writing in the left-wing opinion magazine *The Nation*, had ridiculed the militarism and brutal sophistries of *The Soldier and the Salute*.

The review was published on April 6, 1957. The Cold War was scarcely a decade old. *The Soldier and the Salute* constituted a warning: America's liberal society, required the protection of a professional military establishment steeped in conservative realism. In order to keep the peace, military leaders had to take for granted, the irrationality, weakness, and evil in human nature. Liberals were good at reform, not a national security.

Foreign policy, Is not about the relationship among individuals living under the rule of law but about the relationships among states and other groups operating in a largely lawless realm. *The Soldier and the State* concluded with a rousing defense of West Point, which, Huntington wrote, embodies the military ideal at its best bit of Sparta in thee midst of Babylon.

The Soldier and the State, now in its fourteenth printing, went on to become an academic classic. Telford Taylor, the chief American prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials, had this.

In recent decades scholarly commentary has focused less on one aspect of Huntington's book and more on another— less on the need for the military's sense of realism and more on the threat a military may pose to civilian authority. Because democracies lack the discipline political cadres that dictatorships produce, they are especially probe to subtle manipulation by powerful militaries.

The Soldier and the State initiated what has become a familiar pattern in Huntington's long career: his work has not immediately earned brilliant reviews and academia awards but, has garnered mixed reviews and harsh denunciations that ultimately yield to widespread if grudging acceptance.

The Soldier and the State put this issue of civil-military relations on the map. The subject that Huntington has more recently put on the map is the clash of civilizations that is occurring as Western, Islamic, and Asian systems of though and government collide. His argument is more subtle than it is usually given credit for, but some of the main points can be summarized.

- The world modernizing does not mean Westernizing.
- Asia is expanding militarily and economically. Islam is exploding demographically. The West may be declining in relative influence.
- Culture-consciousness is getting stronger, states or peoples may band together because of ideological ones.
- The Western belief that parliamentary democracy and free markets are suitable for everyone will bring the West into conflict with civilizations— notably, Islam and the Chinese— that think differently.
- In a multi-polar world based loosely on civilizations rather than on ideologies, Americans must reaffirm their Western identity.

The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon highlight the tragic relevance not just of Huntington's ideas about a clash of civilizations but of his entire life's work. Since the 1950's he argued that American society requires military and intelligence services that think in the most tragic, pessimistic terms. He has written that liberalism thrives only when security can be taken for granted— and that in the future we may not have that luxury. And he has warned that the West may one day have to fight for its most cherished values and, indeed, physical survival against extremists from other cultures who despise our country and who will embroil us in a civilizational war that is real, even if political leaders and polite punditry must call it by another name.

The history of intellectual battles surrounding American foreign policy since the early Cold War can be told, through Huntington's seventeen books and scores of articles. Kissinger and Brzezinski have also produced distinguished works of scholarship, but these men will be remembered principally for their service in government— Kissinger as National Security Advisor under Richard Nixon and Secretary of State under Nixon and Gerald Ford, and Brzezinski as National Security Advisor under Jimmy Carter. Huntington, though he served briefly in the Administrations of Lyndon Johnson and Carter.

His ideas emerge from seminars and lectures, not from sudden epiphanies. He values his undergraduate students more than he does his graduate students. Graduate students, are more reluctant to challenge this or that professor and have been captured by jargon and orthodoxy of the discipline.

In many ways Samuel Huntington represents a dying breed: someone who combines liberal ideals with a deeply conservative understanding of history and foreign policy. Huntington is a lifelong Democrat. He was a speechwriter for Aldai Stevenson in the 1950s a foreign-policy adviser. Huntington is the founder of Harvard's John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, a redoubt of foreign-active philanthropies: the John M. Olin Foundation, the Smith Richardson Foundation and the Bradley Foundation.

In the June, 1957, edition of *The American Political Science Review*, Huntington published a monograph titled *Conservatism as an Ideology*. Liberalism, he wrote, is an ideology of individualism, free markets, liberty and the rule of law. Classic conservatism, in contrast, has no particular vision: it is rationale, high and necessary, for ensuring the survival of liberal institutions. Conservatism is the rational defense of being against chaos. Real conservatism is about conserving what is, rather than crusading abroad for what is not or proposing radical changes at home. In the United States, Federalists like John Adams and Alexander Hamilton expounded conservative principles to defend a liberal constitution. The American political genius. Is manifest not in our ideas but in our institutions. The greatest need is not so much the creation of more liberal institutions as the successful defense of those which already exist.

Samuel Huntington was born in 1927 in New York City and grew up in middle-class housing projects in the Astoria section of Queens and in the East Bronx. Huntington was a prodigy. He went to Yale from Peter Stuyvesant High School at age sixteen and graduated with exceptional distinction after two and a half years. He served in the U.S. Army and then earned a master's degree in political science from the University of Chicago and a Ph. D. from Harvard. Psychologically, Huntington's world at this time bore the imprint of the New Deal. Still, Harvard manifested an occasional irregularity.

From the outset Huntington's thinking has been focused on the big issues of the modern world: he was always interested in applying intellectual rigor to real-life concerns. Henry Kissinger's first book was largely inspired by early-nineteenth-century European history. Huntington's first book was inspired by what was going on in America when he was a graduate student.

The Soldier and the State was inspired by President Harry Truman's firing General Douglas MacArthur for insubordination in 1951. *The Soldier and the State* was no apologia for militarism, as some simplistic critiques have claimed, but, militarism, as some simplistic critiques have claimed, but, rather, a penetrating analysis of the relationship between the military and society. The most telling passage in *The Soldier and the State* is in

the preface, where the twenty–nine–year–old Huntington came to a conclusion that formed the template of an entire career. On the one hand, he conceded that actual personalities institutions, and beliefs do not fit into neat logical categories, institutions and beliefs do not fit into neat logical categories. But on the other, he argued passionately that neat logical categories are necessary if man is to think profitably about the real world in which he lives and to derive from it lessons for broader application and use. From the end of the War of 1812 through the attack on Pearl Harbor; Huntington wrote, Americans had little reason to worry about foreign threats. National security was taken for granted– an inheritance of geographical circumstance, rather a creation of wise policy.

Huntington reminded us that the modern officer is a professional, whose job is the management of violence and whose client is the state. Although war is old as human–kind a professional military essentially began with the Napoleonic Wars. The liberal values that a democracy holds dear, are also the values that can undermine a professional officer corps. The heart of liberalism is individualism, it emphasizes the reason and moral dignity of the individual. The liberal glorifies self–expression because the liberal takes national security for granted: the military man glorifies obedience because he does not take that security for granted. A democracy may fight better than dictatorship.

Only conservatism, proves properly conducive to military professionalism. Conservatism recognizes the primacy of power in international affairs: it accepts existing institutions; and its goals are limited. The conservative mind, like the military one, believes that human beings learn only from human experience, which leads to an accent on the study of history. Our very greatness, he said, is what makes it difficult for the American liberal mind to deal with the outside world. American nationalism, has been an idealistic nationalism, justified not by the assertion of the idealistic nationalism, justified not by the assertion of the superiority of the American people over other peoples, but by the assertion of the superiority of American ideals over other ideals. American foreign policy is judged by the criteria of universal principles, this leads to a pacifist strain in American liberalism when it comes to defending our hard–core national interests, an aggressive strain when it comes to defending human rights. Although the professional soldier accepts the reality of never–ending and limited conflict, the liberal tendency, is to absolutize and dichotomize war and peace. Liberals will most readily support a war if they can turn the wrote, humanistic ideals. That is why, he wrote, liberals seek to reduce the defense budget even as they periodically demand an adventurous foreign policy. It comes as no surprise to readers of *The Soldier and the State* that the same intellectuals and opinion–makers who consistently underappreciated NATO in the 1970s and 1980s, when the outcome of the Cold War remained in doubt, demanded aggressive NATO involvement in the 1990s in Bosnia and Kosovo, when the stakes for our national security were mucho lower, but the assault on liberal principles was vivid and clear–cut.

The only way to preserve a liberal society, is to define the limits of military control. And the only to do that, is to keep the military and the advice it offers strictly professional. In 1993 General Colin Powell, expressed opposition to U.S. military involvement in Bosnia and was branded a political general. But a reader of Huntington might think a little different about Powell. If his client's territory is under no direct danger, the professional officer cannot recommend the involvement of the state in war except when victory is certain.

The first decade of the Cold War indicated to Huntington that although tension would persist between a liberal society and a vast new defense establishment, the two would find ways to coexist. He saw Truman as a harbinger of this emerging order: liberal at home, but profoundly conservative in foreign affairs. It was the civilian business community. Business pacifism is how he describes the capitalist's view of the world through most of our earlier history.

Religious moralism and economic liberalism combined to make most American Businessmen see international trade and multilateral treaties as more important than power politics. The end of the Cold War has revived that view of the world. Liberals and neoconservatives who now worry about the American Business community's growing economic involvement with the authoritarian China are revisiting an old

Huntington argument

Samuel Huntington as a State Department consultant prepared a 100–page report on the Vietnam War that was later declassified and used as the basis for an article in the July, 1968, issue of *Foreign Affairs*. The article caused a tremendous furor. It embraced the Administration's objective of defeating the North Vietnamese, but explained why the Administration's methods for achieving that objective were all wrong.

Huntington rejected the significance of the Johnson Administration's claim that the proportion of the South Vietnamese population under government control had raised from 40 percent to 60 percent. Huntington pointed out that the question *Whom does the majority of the population really support?* Was relevant only in a stable constitutional democracy like America's. Huntington wrote, even though it is quite hierarchical and undemocratic, the Viet Cong make little progress.

Huntington believes that we should proclaim our values abroad in ways that allow us to take advantage of our adversaries but do not force us to remake societies from within. Thus in the late 1970s he helped Zbigniew Brzezinski and Jimmy Carter to implement a human–rights policy designed to embarrass the Soviet Union, but he has remained skeptical about putting troops on the ground to build Western–style democracy in places with no tradition of it.

Huntington pays attention to ground–level realities. Throughout his career he has displayed an academically atypical fondness for quoting on–the–scene observers (as well as academics) in his footnotes. There are no academic sources for recent events, he told me. There is only academic opinion.

Another problem for American thinking, Huntington continued, is that our history has taught us how to limit government, not how to build it from scratch. Just as our security, a product of geography, was largely unearned, so were our governing institutions and practices, an inheritance from seventeenth–century England. The constitution is about controlling authority; throughout Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the formerly communist world the difficulty is to establish authority. The problem Huntington wrote, is not to hold elections but to create organizations.

Political Order demonstrates that the very modernization they champion causes corruption in the first place. Corruption provides the means for assimilating new groups into the system. The selling of parliamentary seats, for example is typical of an emerging democracy, and preferable to armed attacks against Parliament itself: Corruption, is a less extreme form of alienation than violence.

Huntington portrayed the problem of revolutions, monarchies, praetorian regimes, and feudal states by drawing on a wealth of examples from all over the world. He offered a panorama of the messiness, intractability, and complexity of our times, even as he efficiently distilled and summarized. In one sentence he laid out the different roles played by militaries throughout the twentieth century: In the world of oligarchy, the soldier is a radical; in the middle class world, he is a participant and arbiter; as the mass society looms he becomes the conservative guardian of the existing order.

The early 1990s were a time of optimism and even triumphalism in the West. The Cold War had just been won. Neoconservatives assumed that democratic elections and the unleashing of market forces would improve life everywhere. Liberals assumed that power politics and huge defense budgets were relics of the past. News stories heralded the growing clout and effectiveness of the United Nations. A new transitional elite was emerging composed of prominent academics and business leaders who believed that the world was on the verge of creating a truly global culture.

The Samuel Huntington published an article titled *The Clash of Civilization?*. The paradigm of a world unified by globalization was challenged in classroom discussion. There was little evidence that any sort of universal civilization existed outside the confines of small, highly educated elite. The fact that the United

States and China, could communicate with each other more easily did not mean that they were any more likely to agree with each other.

In light of subsequent events Huntington's thesis may even seem unremarkable— the ironic fate of true prescience. It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations Conflict between civilizations will be the latest phase of the evolution of conflict in the modern world.

The Clash of Civilizations? was translated into twenty–six languages; conferences were organized around the world to debate the article. The title of this one said it all. For elites in the Third World especially, to acknowledge the truth of Huntington's points would have been acknowledge the fragility of their own status in their perspective societies.

Huntington says that parts of the world are anarchic, and that catastrophe loomed in Africa and Asia; many analysis were willing to admit that, even if they refused to accord it the proper significance. He also said that the demise of communism in no way meant the demise of the atavistic territorial battles that had been the stuff of power politics since time immemorial. The liberal project to unite the world through universal values was destined to the stillborn. For those who thought that the end of the Cold War meant a less dangerous world.

The Islamic world, wasn't uniform. Individual Muslim states often fought or denounced one another. Huntington answered his critics in a second Foreign Affairs in 1993. When people think seriously, they think abstractly; they conjure up simplified pictures of reality called concepts, theories, models, paradigms. The paradigm of the Cold War did not account form many of the conflicts and other developments from 1945 to 1989.

He showed that whereas the West has generated ideologies, the East has generated religions— and explained that religion is now the more menacing force on the international scene. He pointed out, counterintuitively, that because communism was a Central European ideology, the Soviet Union was philosophically closer to the West than to the Eastern Orthodox Russia that has succeeded it. He remained us that the Cold War was a fleeting event compared with the age–old struggle between the West and Islam.

The dangerous clashes of the future are likely to arise from the interaction of Western arrogance, Islamic intolerance, and Sinic (Chinese) assertiveness. In the years since his article and book were published, NATO has expanded into three Protestant–Catholic countries while leaving out several Eastern Orthodox countries.

American church groups, liberal and conservative alike, have united to support Christians fighting for human rights in China, and against Muslims slaughtering Christians in Sudan. Huntington's ability to account for these and so many other phenomena within a general theory points up the lasting importance of his work. Meanwhile, we are the Kremlinologists who during the Cold War told us that the Soviet system who basically stable; or the Africanists who in the 1960s and 1970s predicted growth and development in places that have been thorn apart by war?

Huntington has warned in the past that is pointless to expect people who are not at all like us to become significantly more like us; In the emerging world of ethnic conflict and civilization clash, Western belief in the universality of Western culture suffers three problems: it is false it is immoral, and it is dangerous. In the incipient war being led by the United States, the utmost caution is required to keep the focus on the brute fact of terrorism. He observes that Osama bin Laden, for his part, clearly hopes to incite civilizational conflict between Islam and the West. The United States must prevent this from happening chiefly by assembling a coalition against terrorism that crosses civilization lines. The United States must take this opportunity to accomplish two things: first, to draw the nations of the Western more tightly together; and second, to try to

understand more realistically how the world looks through the eyes of other people.

It is a dangerous place, in which large numbers of people resent our wealth, power, and culture, and vigorously oppose our efforts to persuade or coerce them to accept our values of human rights, democracy, and capitalism. In the world America must learn to distinguish among our true friends who will be with us and we with them through thick and thin; opportunistic allies with whom we have some but not all interests in common; strategic partner-competitors with whom we have a mixed relationship; antagonists who are rivals but with whom negotiation is possible; and unrelenting enemies who will try to destroy us unless we destroy them first.

In an article for *Foreign Affairs* in 1997, *The Erosion of American National Interests*, he wrote, "At some point in the future, the combination of security threat and moral challenge will require Americans once again to commit major resources to the defense of national interests."

Real conservatism cannot aspire to lofty principles, because its task is to defend what already exists. The conservative dilemma is that conservatism's legitimacy can come only from being proved right by events, whereas liberals, whenever they are proved wrong, have universal principles to fall back on. Samuel Huntington has always held liberal ideals. But he knows that such ideas cannot survive without power, and that power requires careful upkeep.

If American political science leaves any lasting intellectual monument, the work of Huntington will be one of its pillars. A passage in the conclusion of *American Politics* has always seemed to me to capture the essence of Huntington's enduring judgment and political sensibility: "Critics say that America is a lie because its reality falls so far short of its details. They are wrong. America is not a lie; it is a disappointment. But it can be a disappointment only because it's also a hope."