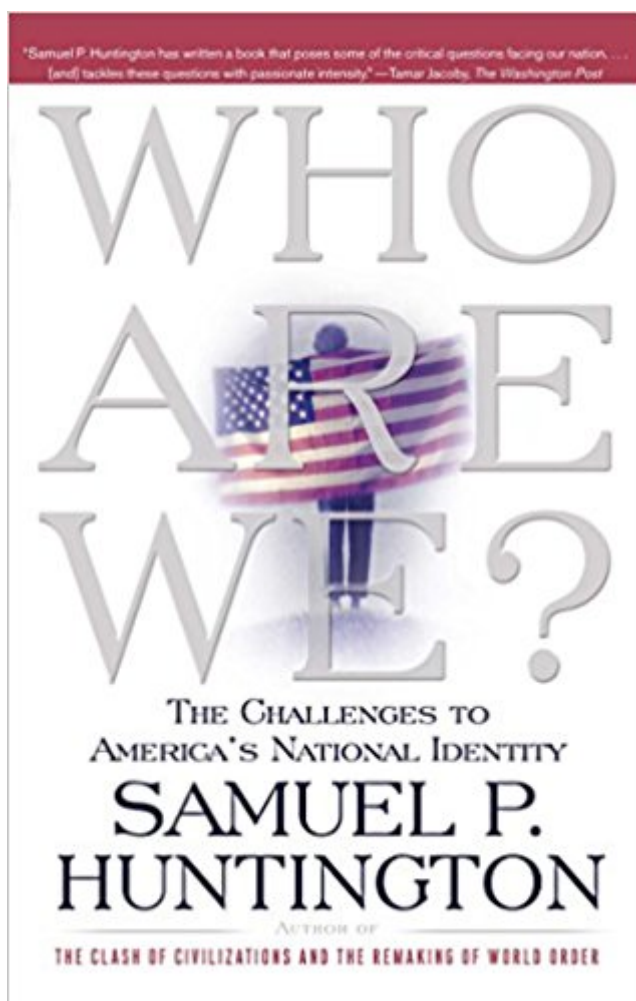


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Who Are We?: The Challenges To America's National Identity



Synopsis

In his seminal work *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Samuel Huntington argued provocatively and presciently that with the end of the cold war, “civilizations” were replacing ideologies as the new fault lines in international politics. Now in his controversial new work, *Who Are We?*, Huntington focuses on an identity crisis closer to home as he examines the impact other civilizations and their values are having on our own country. America was founded by British settlers who brought with them a distinct culture, says Huntington, including the English language, Protestant values, individualism, religious commitment, and respect for law. The waves of immigrants that later came to the United States gradually accepted these values and assimilated into America’s Anglo-Protestant culture. More recently, however, our national identity has been eroded by the problems of assimilating massive numbers of primarily Hispanic immigrants and challenged by issues such as bilingualism, multiculturalism, the devaluation of citizenship, and the “denationalization” of American elites. September 11 brought a revival of American patriotism and a renewal of American identity, but already there are signs that this revival is fading. Huntington argues the need for us to reassert the core values that make us Americans. Timely and thought-provoking, *Who Are We?* is an important book that is certain to shape our national conversation about who we are.

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Customer Reviews

In his seminal *The Clash of Civilizations*, Huntington anticipated the United States’ battle with

militant Islam. Here he turns his laser on America-or, rather, America as he thinks it ought to be. Despite its clinical tone, this book is an aggressive polemic whose central argument-that America, at heart, has been and in many ways should remain a Christian, Anglocentric country-wouldn't be out of place on many a conservative radio station. The author seeks at length to prove that the American Creed, which he defines as a Protestant-influenced ideology modeled on the British system, was the founders' original intent and remains America's best course. He then turns to many of the usual subjects-the imperiled primacy of English, the dangers of immigration and multiculturalism-to make his case. He argues that a growing divide between the patriotic working class and "denationalized elites" will lead to internal fissures. Where those findings can lead is another question. For instance, he predicts a movement of white nativism. This movement while not "advocating white racist supremacy" would still believe that the "mixing of races and hence culture is the road to national degeneration." The book is also marred by a number of self-contradictions; for example, Huntington draws heavily on the founders to make a nationalist case even as he acknowledges that notions of Americanism (as opposed to allegiances to individual states) became popular only after the Civil War. Exhaustively researched and occasionally inspired, this polemic remains more often filled with colorless and ineffectual writing that will provide evidence for the converted but do little to persuade the doubters. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Perhaps best known for *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996), the us-against-them polemic that inspired many international relations dissertations, prolific political scientist Huntington aims his latest book at domestic affairs. America, he argues, is in the midst of an identity crisis. Immigration, multiculturalism, secularism, and the end of the cold war have led to a watering down of what it means to be American, and at an especially crucial time, when Americanism is under attack worldwide. The solution? Americans need to get in touch with their English-speaking Anglo-Protestant roots, defined in what he calls the "American Creed" and demonstrated through 300 years of cultural salience. September 11 marks, for the author, an opportunity for Americans to come together in reinvigorated nationalism and reinvented American culture. Armed with statistics and historical analyses, Huntington performs significant contortions to successfully avoid seeming racist or intolerant. He remains, however, highly polemic, with sharp jabs at multiculturalism and bilingualism sure to alienate many readers. Brendan Driscoll Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or

unavailable edition of this title.

I am writing this review on Thursday, August 18, 2016. Election day is roughly two months away. This book was published on December 2005. Almost at the very end of the book you will find the following sentence: "The alternative to cosmopolitanism and imperialism is nationalism devoted to the preservation and enhancement of those qualities that have defined America since its founding". The gist of this book, after a brilliant exposition of what it has meant traditionally to be an American, resides in the quoted sentence. If America is to remain being what made it great, it has to assert and solidify itself through nationalism. The nineteenth century saw the birth of a truly national conscience in America and it was mainly as this inward looking nation that the USA found its preeminent place among the great nations on Earth. Measured isolationism served well the USA. Nationalism and another round of measured isolationism might save it now from an identity crisis that menaces to usher in an implosion. Professor Huntington explains in depth what is at stake in this coming election although the book was published eleven years ago. I ever wanted an elucidation of what it means to be an American and I found it in this book. This important book remains pertinent and is a must read for every citizen that is planning to participate in the upcoming election.

This is a great read from Huntington. He saw the issue with immigration and assimilation well before it was on the radar of most of the country. Can a we still be a nation when people share less and less in common? The thesis being that what it means to be American has changed over time and become a wider definition and we are down to those who believe in the American creed. In 2017 can we even agree what the American creed is? He thoroughly demolishes the nation of immigrant platitudes we so often hear spouted from the ruling class. America began as a nation of settlers and subsequent immigrants largely assimilated to the dominant Anglo-Protestant culture - they did not greatly change it. He makes the prescient point that in the past there was strong societal pressure to assimilate fully to the dominant culture, but these forces have been completely removed in the present time (its become even worse in the present day). Will America survive as a multicultural, multilingual, multiethnic, polyglot society? Time will tell, but he seems to think only with a strong external threat to unite disparate people (like 9/11) is this sustainable. I encourage anyone who wants to learn more about America and the impact of immigration to read this book.

Though a few years old, this is an important and interesting book. It is a bit of a heavy read,

requiring focus, because it's by a Harvard Academic, but it is well researched and documented, with a plethora of data and quotes. The book is comprehensive discussion of how the American identity was shaped, how recent events like the unprecedented immigration of millions who do not seek to join the existing culture and how current trends may play out in the future, it should be of interest to every thoughtful American, of whatever political persuasion, who is concerned about the future.

Some quotes to provoke your interest: "...the proportion of Christians in America has remained relatively constant. In three surveys between 1989 and 1996, between 84% and 88% of Americans said they were Christians. The proportion of Christians in American rivals or exceeds the proportion of Jews in Israel, of Muslims in Egypt, of Hindus in India, and of Orthodox believers in Russia." P99.

"Americanization, Justice Louis Brandeis declared in 1919, meant that the immigrant 'adopts the clothes, the manners, and the customs generally prevailing here...substitutes for his mother tongue the English language,' insures that 'his interests and affections have become deeply rooted here.'...When he has done all this he will have 'the national consciousness of an American.'" P131

"Classifications and distinctions based on race or color,' the leading black attorney, Thurgood Marshall argued in 1948, 'have no moral or legal authority in our society.'" P147. "23% of Hispanic immigrants were citizens, compared to 69% of non-Hispanic immigrants." P239 "Between 1994 and 1995, applications for citizenship increased by over 75%.... ...the result of two factors.... First... about 3,000,000 illegal immigrants became eligible for naturalization in 1994. ... Second, the vulnerability of government benefits available for aliens became visible in 1994 with California's proposition 187 and the debate leading up to Congresses passage of the Welfare Reform and Control Act of 1996. (I'd add "under Bill Clinton!") These developments threatened to open up a huge gap between the economic benefits available to citizens and non-citizens." P218 "An analysis of welfare use in 2001 by immigrants from a dozen regions and countries showed Mexican immigrant households ranking first, with 34.1% using welfare, compared to 22.7% of all immigrant households, and 14.6% of native American households." p236

Robert A. Hall
Author: The Coming Collapse of the American Republic

This book would be characterized as a right wing treatise. It goes to great lengths to classify the US as Anglo-Protestant and majoritarian. But, whether one agrees with those classifications or not, there are many important insights in the book. And, it is very well reasoned and scholarly. Overall, it is well worth reading, whatever your political orientation.

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